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MY YEARS IN PARIS

I

FIRST INTERVIEW WITH THE EMPEROR, NAPOLEON THE THIRD, AND THE EMPRESS EUGÉNIE

My husband had been sent to France—to St. Sauveur, where the Emperor was staying—in order to ratify some clause of the Treaty of Zürich, which had been concluded when the war with Italy came to an end. His Majesty, who had known him for a long time, expressed a wish to meet him again at Biarritz, adding, "I shall hope to see the Princess there as well as yourself."

On his return from St. Sauveur my husband wrote and asked me to join him in Paris. I was in Bohemia just then with my little girl, who was only two years old, but I complied with his request and made all the necessary arrangements for the child to remain at Königswart.

We stayed for about a week in Paris at the Hôtel de la Paix, Rue de la Paix, and it was from the windows of that hotel that I witnessed the triumphal entry of the troops

on their return from Italy. This sight inspired me with the profound antipathy I have always felt for the Italians—perhaps it would be more correct to say it increased that antipathy.

I have a horror of people who talk so much, and do so little. The Italians asked the French to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for them, and the French most foolishly (and how they must have regretted it later on !) set out with drawn swords to deliver the heroic Italians from "the infamous yoke" of Austria ! . . . Thinking people in France were absolutely anti-Italian, while the Faubourg St. Germain frankly detested them—maybe because his Majesty had a certain amount of sympathy with them. The day after the troops entered Paris, the Emperor and Empress left for Biarritz, where they settled down at the Villa Eugénie.

My preparations took but a short time. I provided myself with all the frocks, hats, etc., necessary for the occasion, and after a few days we joined their Majesties at Biarritz, putting up at the Hôtel d'Angleterre, which was supposed to be the best hotel in the place, but which to my mind was atrocious.

My maid was still brushing the dust off my clothes, and I was still smoothing my hair, when we heard a voice in the street outside inquiring whether Princess Metternich had arrived. I looked out of the window and

saw a lady whom I immediately recognised as the Empress Eugénie ; she was accompanied by several other ladies and gentlemen. My husband, recognising her Majesty's voice, ran down to receive her ; they at once entered into conversation, and concealing myself behind a curtain, I examined her at my leisure.

The Empress was of medium height, a trifle too stout for her age, and, judged according to the Austrian standard, her figure was nothing out of the way. And yet the general effect was charming. She was wonderfully graceful. I was not able to distinguish her features very clearly, as she was wearing not only a large hat, but also a veil which partly hid her face. Her Majesty was very simply dressed. She wore a black silk skirt looped up all round, a fashion which she herself had introduced in order to do away with long dresses when staying in the country, and a very sensible fashion too, although the Faubourg St. Germain took the strongest objection to it, and declared that she went about in short skirts like a ballet girl! With this skirt she wore a perfectly simple red flannel shirt, with a belt round her waist. She held a stick in one hand, and in the other she carried a green parasol. Her conversation with my husband never hung fire for one moment, and I must say what struck me most of all was the extraordinary way

she differed from every other sovereign I had ever met. She looked, and really was, an accomplished woman of the world. After a while she bade my husband "good-bye" and "au revoir," and he, on returning to our rooms, told me that their Majesties hoped to see us that same evening at the Villa Eugénie. We arrived there punctually at nine o'clock.

The Empress, surrounded by the ladies and gentlemen of her suite, was seated at an immense table on which were several shaded lamps—she was playing patience. The ladies were working, and my first impression was that of a cosy family party, gathered together in a comfortable sitting-room, from which every trace of royal etiquette had been deliberately banished. It was evidently the home of a great lady, but not that of a reigning sovereign. The Empress rose at once and came forward to receive me, and holding out her hand she told me how pleased she was to make my acquaintance, how much both she and the Emperor liked my husband, and how delighted they were that he had brought me to see them. She then sat down again, placing a little leather cushion at her back. I have never seen her without this cushion; she suffered a good deal from backache, and never went anywhere without it. Inviting me to sit beside her, she immediately

entered upon the most animated conversation. After a few minutes I felt that I was talking to someone I had known for years ; it was quite impossible to be simpler, more natural or more totally devoid of affectation. She told me that she would present me to the Emperor in a few minutes, adding, " He is in his study at present, but will join us almost directly."

Practically everyone succumbed to the extraordinary charm of the Empress, and I most certainly was no exception to the rule, for I was absolutely fascinated by her grace, her kindness, and her wonderful beauty. Her features were clear-cut and delicate ; the expression of her eyes gentle and intelligent ; the nose, the mouth, the oval of her face, the shape of her head, her neck and shoulders, were all really perfect. Her teeth were lovely and very even, her smile delicious. But—and this surprised me very much indeed—she darkened her eyebrows and eyelashes, without even attempting to disguise the fact. She told me later on that she hated fair eyebrows and eyelashes, which, according to her, made people look not only " washed-out," but insipid into the bargain. Her hands were small and beautifully made ; as to her feet, they were those of a thoroughbred Andalusian—and what more can be said ? But even greater than her beauty was the incomparable grace of every movement—it would have been

possible to paint her in any and every position into which she naturally fell. Her hair was of a slightly reddish tint. As she said to me one day, "My hair had the colour of a carrot when I was a child."

I must frankly own that I was quite taken aback by the impression produced on me by this beautiful woman, whose good taste had also made her the arbiter of fashion. That night she wore a white muslin dress covered with Valenciennes lace and trimmed with mauve ribbons, nothing in her hair, and three rows of superb pearls round her neck. It is quite impossible to give any adequate idea of her beauty and attractiveness. She went on talking with extraordinary verve and animation, and though she set everyone absolutely at ease, she made it impossible for anyone present to forget the great lady she really was by right of birth. There was nothing studied in her manner; on the contrary, it was full of the peculiar charm that is born of the complete absence of pose of any sort.

We were talking of many things when the door opened, and the Emperor made his appearance. All rose to their feet, even the Empress. As a matter of fact she always rose from her chair whenever the Emperor entered the room, even if one was *tête à tête* with her in her study, or in her little boudoir. The Emperor came straight up to me (he had

a strange, halting way of walking, quite peculiar to himself—it was almost as if he were dragging himself along), and holding out his hand he said, "I am so glad to see you here, and I hope you will stay on for some time—not only in Biarritz, but also, later on, in Paris."

I thanked him for having so kindly received us on the very day of our arrival; he then said, "But we were very anxious to see you! The Prince, as you know, is one of our oldest friends and we are both devoted to him; I hope very much that you will be happy in our midst and that we may see a great deal of you in the future."

From that day forward the attitude of the Emperor and Empress never varied in the slightest degree towards either of us, nor did they ever neglect an occasion where it was possible to give us proofs of their kindness and affection. To the day of his death, my husband was sincerely, even deeply, attached to them, and as far as I am concerned, I can never forget how much I owe them both. I have a profound respect for the Emperor's memory, and my heart is full of tender recollections of the Empress.

After welcoming me so kindly the Emperor greeted my husband; then he seated himself at the table, and the conversation became general. One laughed and talked just as one

laughs and talks everywhere when people belonging to the same world are gathered together. The Emperor told some good stories and thoroughly enjoyed those told by other people. I entered into everything with that carelessness which, alas, has always been my predominating characteristic; however, I am thankful to say that my first appearance at the Court of Napoleon III. really was an unqualified success! The Emperor laughed good-naturedly at everything, and so did the Empress. We got on splendidly together.

I looked surreptitiously at the Emperor once or twice; he did not look exactly old, still, he looked older than I had imagined him to be. He was a plain man and his figure was anything but good. The upper part of the body seemed too heavy for the lower, and it cannot be denied that he walked badly, and yet, in spite of all these defects, he did not fail to please—he had real charm.

People used to say that his eyes were dull, and that he had a vague way of looking about, but they appealed to me more than I can tell; their expression was wonderfully kind and gentle.

The Emperor's manners were perfect, and he had the great simplicity, the absolute want of pose, that distinguishes the great gentleman from the ordinary type of men. He was absolutely straightforward, and I am perfectly

certain he never gave a second thought to the effect he might be producing. He expressed himself with the greatest facility, and immediately put the person he was talking to completely at his ease. He was always his own natural self, thus making it possible for others to be perfectly natural when in his company; at least that is how he always impressed me. Had I wished to learn how to be perfectly natural it is certainly the Emperor Napoleon who could best have taught me to be so. All affectation necessarily vanished into thin air when talking to him, and I must say it was exactly the same with the Empress. She had the charm and seductiveness so characteristic of the women of the South, while he was calm and thoughtful, with all the courtesy of a well-bred Frenchman.

And now to return to that memorable evening when I made my debut at the Imperial Court where I passed so many happy years. I can only add these words—I left my heart behind me at the Villa Eugénie, where, as we rose to say good-night at about half-past eleven, their Majesties wished me "Au revoir, and may it be soon and often."

I lived for eleven years in close contact with them, and can only say that the more I saw of them, the more I learned to care for them.

II

PRESENTATION OF THE "SOCIÉTÉ DE LA CHARITÉ MATERNELLE" TO THE EMPRESS EUGÉNIE. 1855.

THE Empress Eugénie had been married only a year when the Archbishop of Paris, Monseigneur Morlot, asked permission to present the "Société de la Charité Maternelle" to her Majesty. She graciously consented to give them an audience, and *this* was the audience to which the Emperor Napoleon had referred when, during my visit to the Tuileries, after my official reception as Austrian Ambassadress, he asked the Empress to give me an account of what had taken place on that occasion.

And now for my story :—

The "Société de la Charité Maternelle" was founded by Queen Marie Antoinette, its object being to assist poor women during the period of their lying-in. No one but the reigning sovereign was allowed to be its president and protectress.

The Empresses Joséphine and Marie-Louise and, after them, Queen Marie Amélie, and, I believe, the Duchesse d'Angoulême, acquitted

themselves of this task, though I cannot speak with absolute certainty in regard to the last lady. The Emperor was eager to revive this old tradition, and begged the Empress Eugénie to reorganise the Society by placing herself at the head of it. To this proposal she at once agreed.

After everything had been carefully considered and a great number of people had been enrolled as members, and after the Archbishop of Paris, who, in his quality of Grand Almoner to her Majesty, and President of the aforesaid Society, had declared the statutes to be in perfect order, and when every member of the Society had been duly registered, it was deemed advisable to approach the Grand Chamberlain—the Duc Tascher de la Pagerie —with a view to obtaining the favour of an audience, during which the Archbishop would officially beg the Empress to accept the presidency, as her predecessors had done, and would also ask for permission to read her the statutes, in order that they might obtain her sanction and approval.

On the appointed day the Archbishop, attired in his ecclesiastical robes, and accompanied by his Grand Vicars, presented himself at the Palace of the Tuileries, where he had convoked a meeting of all the members of this Society. A great many people were present. There were no absentees, for everyone was

curious to see how the Empress would bear herself on this occasion, as it was the first function at which she was to preside without the assistance of the Emperor.

The reception was to take place in the Throne-room, and according to the Emperor's directions, the Empress was to stand immediately in front of the throne, surrounded by her Court—that is to say, by Princess Essling, la Duchesse de Bassano, the twelve ladies of the palace, the Grand Master of the Ceremonies, her chamberlains and her equerries.

At two o'clock precisely the folding-doors were thrown open and the Archbishop made his appearance, followed by his immense retinue. The Empress was quite wrought up —she was actually trembling, but she held herself erect as she glanced for the last time at the little speech that had been composed for her by the Emperor, and that she had learned by heart. To her great relief she realised that she knew every word of it.

The Archbishop made three low bows, and having finally reached the foot of the throne he began his discourse.

"Madame!" . . .

Overcome by emotion, he was unable to proceed for a few seconds, when again he said:

"Madame!" . . .

Another pause. The perspiration stood in great drops on his forehead and gradually

rolled down his face. Everyone began to feel dreadfully uncomfortable. The Empress, who had been slightly flushed at the beginning of the interview, went white. Her ladies-in-waiting were visibly agitated, but all of a sudden the Archbishop, pulling himself together and apparently finding the thread of his discourse, said in a firm and resolute voice that evidently meant business :

"Madame!" . . .

Incredible as it may seem, this distinguished prelate, accustomed to address hundreds of people from the pulpit, now found himself unable to utter two consecutive words. There was another interminable pause, during which everyone present went through tortures. As for Madame de la Bédoyère, she completely lost her head and suddenly cried "Bravo!!!" at the top of her voice, to the unmitigated horror of the "Société Maternelle" and everybody else.

But the climax was yet to be reached. A moment later the Empress burst out crying. Her nerves had given way even more completely than those of her lady-in-waiting, whose "Bravo!!!" was still ringing in the ears of the scandalised assembly. Stumbling down the steps of the throne and sobbing hysterically, her Majesty bowed to the wretched Archbishop, and retired to her own apartments, followed by the entire Court.

The Emperor, on hearing the approach of the carriages that were to take home the Archbishop and his flock, very naturally inferred that the audience had come to an end, and came up to inquire how everything had gone off. To his dismay he found the Empress in tears, and anxiously begged to be acquainted with the cause of her distress. She told him what had happened—how horribly painful the situation had been from beginning to end.

"But in such a case you ought to have addressed him first," said the Emperor; "a few words from you would at once have put the Archbishop at his ease!"

"That is all very well," said the poor Empress, "but I had prepared nothing but that one little speech—I *did* know that by heart—I knew every word of it; but *how* could I make it when it began by thanking him, with all my heart, for the touching and eloquent words in which he had just addressed me, and to which I had listened with so much pleasure!!!"

III

THE ASCENT OF LA RUNE

(*Biarritz*, 1859.)

If there was one thing the Empress thoroughly enjoyed, it was a long day in the country, and about a week after I had been presented to her she asked me whether I would care to make, with her and several other guests, the ascent of La Rune, a mountain in the Pyrenees. Everyone was to meet at the Villa Eugénie, after which we were to drive to the foot of the mountains in the Emperor's brakes. Postilions rode the splendid horses harnessed to these brakes, and coachmen were entirely dispensed with.

We set out one morning at ten o'clock, a party of about fifty people. The scenery through which we passed was lovely. We drove through Bayonne, along the banks of the Adour, and finally drew up at the spot where the guides and their mules were waiting for us. It was a remarkably pretty scene, and I was greatly struck by the picturesque Basque costumes worn by the men.

We tumbled out of our carriages and

collected all our goods and chattels—cloaks, umbrellas, goloshes—everyone talking at the same time, and each one getting into another's way, while the Empress clamoured for her green bag, that famous green silk bag without which she refused to stir, and which had that day been given into the custody of her equerry on duty, the Marquis de Lagrange. This green bag contained everything her Majesty might require on one of these excursions, and it had gradually become the intimate friend of everyone she knew. We all looked after it, made much of it, and almost loved it. We other insignificant mortals carried no bags, either green, blue or red ; we had simple travelling rugs, into which we had stuffed everything we were likely to want during the day. These rugs formed a sort of escort to the green bag, which always sat majestically on the top of them, on account of its exalted rank.

We halted for quite a long while beside the mules, as everyone wished to choose his own mount. This was not so simple a matter as it may seem at first sight, for according to Basque custom, two people always shared a mule between them ; two dreadful little chairs —"cacolets"—were placed on either side of the mule, and saddles, as we understand them, were conspicuous by their absence. The great thing was to find two people of more or less

the same weight ; this was the real crux, and the noise made by fifty people all clamouring for a suitable companion can easily be imagined. The thin members of the party took good care to cling to one another, while the fat ones rushed excitedly into one another's arms. At last, after countless difficulties, we were hoisted on to our respective mules, and off we started, the Empress leading the way with Princess Anna Murat. As for myself, being as thin as a lath, I shared my mule with the Comtesse de la Poëze, one of the Empress's ladies-in-waiting ; she was so slight that people used to compare her to a curtain floating in the breeze, her body being an almost negligible quantity. I must say that anything more trying than this way of travelling can hardly be imagined. The discomfort is really very great, for although a small footboard is attached to each chair by two bits of rope, it wobbles about to such a degree that one's feet have practically nothing to rest upon, and after an hour or so of such struggling for a foothold, both my unfortunate companion and myself were thoroughly worn out. To this species of mild torture must be added the succession of nervous shocks experienced by two women obliged to ride for the first time on one mule along a narrow mountain path, these accursed animals taking a malignant pleasure in walking on the outside edge of

the path even when it is, more or less, hanging over a precipice. The whole thing is simply abominable.

At last my poor "floating curtain" proposed that we should both dismount. I asked for nothing better, and great was our joy when once again we felt the ground beneath our feet. With renewed vigour we climbed up the mountain behind the long string of mules, and our delight can be imagined when all of a sudden we reached a beautiful meadow where the Emperor's servants had prepared a luncheon which was spread on table-cloths that lay upon the grass. The mules halted, everyone dismounted, and we settled down to enjoy the food for which we had been longing. The Empress presided at this meal. Like all the rest of us, she sat upon the grass; she hated to be treated on these occasions differently from anyone else.

Luncheon was hardly over when some Basque musicians appeared upon the scene; the sound of their tambourines was delicious, and at last the Empress could no longer resist the temptation to dance to the fandango they were playing. The view at our feet was superb—*joie de vivre*, the keynote of the moment. Taking a pair of castanets from one of the Basque musicians, and with a grace I have never seen equalled, she danced the national dance of her own lovely country.

The supreme distinction with which she danced, added to the charm that was really inseparable from everything she did or said, roused our enthusiasm, and when she had finished dancing, or I should rather say "acting" the fandango, for she only glided along the ground, which now and then she deliberately struck with her beautiful little feet, she turned to us, and said quite simply, with the absolute lack of affectation that was so characteristic of her, "Isn't the fandango a delicious dance?"

She was wearing that day a little Spanish hat with two black "pompoms," and the same simple dress in which I saw her for the first time—a black skirt and a red flannel shirt; the dress just suited that particular dance, and fitted perfectly into the picture. I shall not easily forget that vision of the Empress—that vision of grace and loveliness. She was a noble incarnation of the charm and beauty of her own beautiful country. She gave one the impression of an Andalusian aristocrat *pur sang*—proud of her race, proud of her country. Only a fool bereft of all sense of beauty could have called her to account for the way she danced that day before her guests. And if David danced before the Ark, I am perfectly certain it was with no more dignity than the Empress Eugénie danced before us that memorable fandango.

But, sooner or later, all that delights the heart of man comes to an end in this sad world of ours, and from that moment affairs took a tragic turn.

Everyone refused point-blank to have anything more to do with the mules and their detestable little "cacolets," although we had yet to reach the top of the mountain, which towered above us to an alarming extent. . . . So we all set valiantly forth on foot, the Empress, as usual, leading the way, full of energy and making light of every difficulty. I walked beside her; the "floating curtain" was in the rear with all the other laggards!

At last, after a long ascent that lasted for two full hours, we reached the summit. It was beginning to grow dark, and there was only just time to admire the view, which was really glorious, stretching on the one hand to Spain, on the other to Biarritz, Fuenterrabia and San Sebastian. The frontier posts were within a few yards, and the Empress laughingly walked passed them, saying as she did so, "You will see whether the newspapers don't give a full account of my prolonged sojourn in Spain!"

Just then one of the chamberlains advised her Majesty that it was high time to get back to the carriages, so, taking his advice, we began our homeward journey, some of us walking, others, in spite of all their protests,

getting into the much-despised "cacolets" as soon as they got the chance. I am bound to confess that the gaiety of the party diminished with every footstep, and those who, during that return journey, uttered no word of complaint deserve, in my humble opinion, to go down to posterity as great, if not heroic souls.

Silently we plodded along. Night fell. It was extremely difficult to pick one's way along in the dark, and we hastily lit the torches and lanterns with which we had had the good sense to provide ourselves. Most of the women, unaccustomed to walking, were loud in their complaints—many of them were on the verge of tears, as their shoes (and deplorable shoes they were!) had given way. Others had themselves hoisted into the "cacolets," but said it made them feel sick to go downhill! The Lamentations of Jeremiah were nothing compared to theirs. The Comtesse de la Bédoyère, another of the Empress's ladies-in-waiting, suddenly collapsed and had to be supported by my husband on one side and by her brother-in-law (the husband of the "floating curtain") on the other. As she was very stout, and very heavy, the two men had their work cut out, they themselves almost collapsing in their efforts to support her, and stopping at every moment to wipe the perspiration from their faces. But the climax was reached when

poor Madame de la Bédoyère fell back in their arms, declaring that she really could *not* go one step farther, that she would far rather be left behind, even if it meant certain death ! A consultation was held. The procession was held up, and the Empress ordered the guides to improvise a stretcher. No sooner said than done ; in a few moments the stretcher was ready and the unfortunate lady-in-waiting was lifted on to it ; it was carried by four guides, who changed places with four others every quarter of an hour.

The sight of this stretcher had roused the envy of all the other exhausted walkers, and demands for similar ones were soon heard on all sides (as though they were on sale at every corner !). Naturally it took a certain time to make them, and the darker it grew the more difficult it became for the guides to cut down the branches, which of course had to be tied together and made perfectly safe and fit for use. The wailing and gnashing of teeth that went on was positively indecent ! The ladies-in-waiting were suddenly metamorphosed into red-hot rebels, the guests into revolutionaries raging at sovereigns whose outrageous whims transported them, against their will, to well-nigh inaccessible mountain-tops ! They swore to revenge themselves upon her, and it is my belief that in their utter despair and complete breakdown they would gladly have strangled

the poor Empress—on the following day, at latest !

But towards ten o'clock we caught a glimpse of our carriages, and the sight of these thrice-blessed vehicles was acclaimed with such an outburst of unbounded joy, with such cataracts of emotion, that the climbers were ready to fling themselves into the arms of the postilions, and I feel sure they would even have kissed them—on the slightest provocation.

The Empress's shoes had proved equal to the emergency, and so had mine, and we were the only two of the whole party who were able to get into the brake without assistance. Her Majesty congratulated me on my walking powers, but I told her that I was accustomed to climbing mountains, as during my frequent visits to Ischl I had made many ascents, and was really quite used to long walks. "Still," I added, "excursions of this sort are rather more than most women are able to manage, for they make a very real demand on one's powers of endurance."

"You are quite right," said the Empress, "and another time I shall not invite anyone who is not absolutely up to the mark. Our next picnic had better take place on the *Seagull*, the despatch-boat that is lying in the harbour, and that is entirely at the Emperor's disposal. We might take it one day and go over to Fuenterrabia. . . ."

I ventured to ask her Majesty whether she was not afraid that some of her friends might prove themselves bad sailors.

"Good Heavens!" she cried, "you surely don't mean to insinuate that these ladies are bound to go to pieces at sea, as well as on land. That really would be the last straw!"

But subsequent events proved that I knew what I was talking about!

IV

A PICNIC AT SEA

The Empress Eugénie had stood to her guns, and in spite of all the objections timidly brought forward by me, she had decided that we were to have a picnic at sea on the despatch-boat, the *Seagull*. Fifty-two people, including the ladies and gentlemen of the household, were invited to this picnic, which was to surpass in gaiety every precedent. We were to have tea on board, after which we were to visit the little Spanish town of Fuenterrabia, winding up with a supper-party at the Villa Eugénie. That the programme, as originally conceived, was strictly adhered to, is more than I am able to state with truth, and as to the gay proceedings to which everyone was so greatly looking forward, I don't believe that the most accomplished courtier alive, even after racking his brains, would have found a good word to say for them. But I must not anticipate—I must begin at the beginning. Well, then, one beautiful afternoon, at about two o'clock, supremely unconscious of the real nature of the delights

held in store for them by the coming excursion, a bevy of ladies, dressed in the height of fashion, merrily made their way down to the beach, followed by the gentlemen of the party attired in frock-coats and top-hats—loose jackets and soft hats were not permitted when their Majesties were present. To this day I can see pretty Countess Lise Przezdziencs, her muslin dress, the slip of sky-blue silk she wore beneath it, her straw hat trimmed with blue feathers; to this day I seem to hear her merry peals of laughter. I can still see Countess Walewska dressed in mauve, smiling and charming as ever; la Comtesse de la Bédoyère, who, though scarcely recovered from the fatigue connected with the ascent of the Rune, was nevertheless assuring everybody that "this time, at all events, we are not likely to run the risk of being half killed *en route*"; Miss Vaughan, the young English girl who afterwards became Madame Domingo Arcos, telling everyone that, like all other Englishwomen, she was in her element at sea, and that she had lain awake all night looking forward to this picnic—in fact "a life on the ocean wave" for her! Madame de la Poëze and Madame de Montebello, delighted beyond words at the happy idea with which the Empress had been inspired; the gentlemen giving themselves the airs of weather-beaten old salts, regretting the fact that they had not

been allowed to turn out in sou'-westers and jerseys, and advising us to get our sea legs ready, as we might have to reckon with a fair amount of tossing—there were a good many white horses to be seen. In a word, everyone was looking forward with delight to the trip —with more than delight—with positive enthusiasm. I alone seemed to be haunted by strange presentiments, and walked along with bowed head more like a victim being led to the altar than anything else. Countess Przezdziencs, turning round, asked me whether I was feeling ill. "Not yet," I answered. She laughed heartily. I know no one whose laugh had in it so gay a ring. "You don't mean to say you are afraid of being sea-sick," said she. "What an absurd idea! I am as hungry as a hunter, and am already longing for something to eat."

We were standing in front of the little boats, which were gracefully bobbing up and down (though, to my mind, in rather an alarming way), when the Empress joined us, followed by the ladies and gentlemen of her suite. She was radiant, and looked quite lovely in her white dress and large straw hat trimmed with long white feathers. She bowed and shook hands with all her guests. Turning to the captain she said, "Well, shall we get into the boats?"

In we scrambled, and the next moment the

sailors had pushed them off, jumped in themselves, and with long strokes of the oars were rowing us out to the open sea where the *Seagull* lay at anchor. I was seated next the Empress, and was so infected by her good spirits that I actually began to enjoy myself. After a while we reached the despatch-boat. The waves were rising higher and higher, and it was no easy task to get up the accommodation ladder. The Empress went first, my turn came next, and so on.

This part of the entertainment, I am bound to confess, held no charms for me, and the other ladies were very decidedly of the same opinion as myself. Countess Przezdziencs rent the air with her shrieks—shrieks that penetrated to one's very soul. Countess Walewska only just escaped falling headlong into the sea ; Madame de la Bédoyère was drenched from head to foot ; half the Bay of Biscay poured its waters down the back of Madame de Montebello, and Miss Vaughan, the young English girl so addicted to sports of every description, managed to sprain her ankle. The chapter of accidents had begun.

The *Seagull*, as I have already said, was lying at anchor in the open sea. Let those who know what the Bay of Biscay can be like in dirty weather, throw the first stone at me if, in describing the whole situation as absolutely abominable, I am telling anything but the

sober truth. It took some time to get the fifty-two of us on board, and there was some little delay before we started. But at last the anchor was hauled up from the depths of the sea, the engines began to throb, smoke both black and grey poured forth in great volumes from the funnels, the pilot was at the helm, and the *Seagull*, with Cæsar's wife and all her guests on board, was now cutting her way through the waves and making straight for the coast of Spain. Some pretty wicker arm-chairs had been placed on the deck for our benefit; we all sat down, and the Empress, wreathed in smiles, asked us each in turn whether we were not of one mind with her, as to the delights of a picnic at sea.

As a matter of fact we had already begun to toss about to such a degree that most of us had turned white and green, though no one ventured to assert that, far from being delightful, the whole thing was downright hateful. The Empress said it was delightful and insisted on our agreeing with her, so there was an end of the matter.

The next moment she turned to Count Hoyos (who a little later was accredited to France as Austro-Hungarian Ambassador), and was just about to put a question to him, when he leaped from his chair, put his handkerchief to his mouth and bolted to the side of the ship. Neptune had received his first tribute.

Everyone was profoundly impressed, and an expression of unutterable dejection spread gradually over the sad green faces of everyone present. But the rest of us still managed to hold out. The Emperor's footmen were laying the table for the famous *goûter* to which Countess Przezdziencs was so eagerly looking forward; but neither she nor anyone else dared even cast a glance at the odious little cakes, the preserves, the *compôtes* and—worst of all—the horrible *babas au rhum* with which the table was spread—oh, those *babas!* I was seated at a corner of the table; one of those large and execrable *babas* lay on a plate exactly opposite; the smell of the rum travelled up my nose and head, and down to my inside, which, far too generous to retain a gift presented to it so entirely against its will, hastened to render unto Neptune what was Neptune's. From this moment the insides of every person present flatly refused to behave themselves any longer, and forty-seven people hurriedly followed the example set by Count Hoyos and myself. Realising that the one and only chance when overcome by sea-sickness consists in lying flat on one's back, I took this step without the slightest hesitation, got hold of one or two cushions, tore the leather strap from my travelling rug, and stretched myself out at full length.

This brilliant idea had an immediate success,

and everyone lay down without giving another thought to the Empress. Had she been non-existent we could hardly have taken less notice of her. And to such a degree did we forget her exalted rank, that it was we who were ordering her about, sending her first on one errand, then on another—one of us begging for a wrap, another for a cushion, while others wailed for basins!

The Empress, who really had in her the makings of a sister of charity (she has given proofs of rare courage and devotion over and over again, and the whole world knows the heroic way she behaved when cholera broke out at Amiens), hurried from one to the other, doing all she could to bring relief, though she hardly knew where, or with whom, to begin. There was a steady crescendo of groans, and everyone was violently sick. The *Seagull* was not in any way prepared to carry passengers, and there was a total lack of comfort on board; in the first place, stewards were conspicuous by their absence, and so were their horrible but indispensable little basins. But there was a young doctor on board, who was on duty for the day, and he speedily came to the poor Empress's assistance—she was by now quite breathless. The Emperor's servants were unable to help in any way, for they also were utterly prostrate, and as sea-sick as everybody else on board. Her Majesty,

Count Walewska and my husband were the only ones of the party who still kept up, but the two latter declared that it was quite beyond them to attend upon anyone, as they would inevitably collapse themselves should they attempt to do so!

The steamer continued to plough its way through the waves without the slightest consideration for the forty-seven people who lay groaning on deck, white as ghosts, and completely gone to pieces. It really was harrowing to see and hear them. All the same, I could not resist the temptation of asking Countess Przezdziencs if she were still "longing for something to eat?" She answered in a faint voice, "Oh, how cruel you are! I don't believe I shall ever be able to swallow another morsel of food as long as I live."

Just as the general agony was at its height, the Empress informed us that Fuenterrabia was in sight and that the boats were approaching which were to take us on shore. She also said she would hire carriages there, and that we should all drive back to Biarritz. The universal rejoicing on hearing this good news can be imagined. The *Seagull* came to a standstill, the dreadful accommodation ladder was let down, a resurrection of the dead took place, and with one last effort we all tumbled into the welcome boats. But five minutes after we had been seated in them, the cox-

swain, trying to speak as unconcernedly as possible, told us that he was afraid of proceeding any farther on account of the rocks and the extreme roughness of the sea ; in fact he felt it to be his duty to row us back to the *Seagull.*

This terrible piece of news put the finishing touch to the unhappy little crowd—it was the foundering of all their hopes. Had he taken a club and brought it down with all his might on the heads of those poor unfortunate wretches, the effect could not have been more instantaneous. His announcement was received in dead silence. And then once more we turned our faces in the direction of the accursed *Seagull.* How on earth we all managed to crawl up that horrible accommodation ladder is more than I can conceive, and to this day I ask myself, whence some of those poor women drew the strength to accomplish this feat. More dead than alive, the sailors hoisted them on to the deck like so many bales of cotton, and all lay down again. And once more we resigned ourselves to the horrible pitching and tossing, which, of course, reduced us to the same state as before. My debut had certainly been nothing to boast of, still, I had recovered sufficiently to enable me to pity my poor companions from the bottom of my heart. But I dared not run any risks, and therefore remained lying

on my back. Count Hoyos was stretched alongside of me, more dead than alive; in fact he desired nothing so much as to be dead in good earnest, and I am perfectly certain that had the *Seagull* been wrecked, he would not have raised a finger to save himself. The hateful little despatch-boat had become a floating hospital.

After several hours, at about seven o'clock, Biarritz came in sight. Heaven be praised! Heaven be praised! As we drew near the shore, several rockets rose into the air. We thought they were fireworks to celebrate our return—a graceful attention on the part of the Emperor. How kind he was! how wonderfully kind! (Had he but known the real state of affairs!) Again we hear the sound of approaching boats, but the anxious captain cannot make out more than two—it is already dark. Where can the others be? The pilot hails the *Seagull*, and the next minute is standing on the deck—he is soaking wet. He asks for the captain, to whom he delivers a letter. Its contents were as follows:

"By order of the Emperor.

"The captain is absolutely forbidden to disembark the Empress at Biarritz. The sea is in far too dangerous a condition, and the pilot cannot be sure of landing her Majesty and her

guests in safety. The captain is to put out to sea, and not to enter any port unless he can do so without running the slightest risk."

The Emperor had given the pilot five hundred francs to carry this note on board the *Seagull*. Well, there was nothing more to be said. The engines are set going, the screw begins to turn, and once again we make for the open sea.

Madame de la Bédoyère began to cry. "Mark my words," she sobbed; "we are off to Cochin-China!"

From eight o'clock that night till 2 A.M. next morning did we wander—like the Flying Dutchman—across that thrice-accursed Bay of Biscay, till at last the captain, at the earnest request of the Empress, took his courage in both hands and said he would try to enter the River Adour, adding, however, that he was very much in doubt whether the harbour-master would allow him to do so with the sea in so terrible a condition.

"We can but make the attempt," he said, "and if we get a favourable answer to our signal, so much the better; if not, we must make a dash for Bordeaux."

At last we are close to the lighthouse. The *Seagull* signals "May we cross the bar? The Empress is on board." From the semaphore is signalled the one word "Yes."

It is easy to see that the captain is horribly anxious—the officers are quite pale—together they hold a consultation—they seem to hesitate. What is the matter? Judging from their attitude one would imagine that a tragedy is about to take place! The pilot takes charge of the helm, to which ropes are also attached—six sailors, three on either side, hold on to them—then, in a loud voice, the captain gives more orders. General anxiety has begun to prevail; even those who are sick sit up; the apparently dead return to life, and I myself hear one sailor say to another: "The harbour-master must be a crazy sort of fellow!"

I asked him what he meant by that.

"Well, my little lady, it's no joke to cross the bar with the sea in this condition, and pitch dark into the bargain."

"But surely there is no danger?"

"No danger! Well, if we get across without an accident we'll have the Blessed Virgin to thank for it, I can tell you that much!"

Then there was a general outcry: "Good God! Are we really in danger? For heaven's sake let us put out to sea again! Ah, how horrible!—how horrible! May God have mercy on us!"

These exclamations were heard on every side. But there was no putting out to sea again—the time for that was past.

"There's the bar!" cry the sailors, and at that same moment a gigantic wave, a veritable avalanche, sweeps over the *Seagull;* it is followed by another still higher, still angrier; then comes a third which almost swallows us up, and then—a sudden calm. We have crossed the bar—we are in the river.

I heard a sailor say to the helmsman: "You're the right sort and no mistake; without you we'd have gone to the bottom."

The *Seagull* drew near the landing-stage, and there we saw the Emperor. He had ordered his carriage at two-thirty and had driven out in hot haste to the port of the Adour so as to prevent us from entering. He had arrived only the moment before. Shouting to the harbour-master: "Do not under any pretext whatsoever allow the Empress to disembark!" He received the answer: "Sire, the Empress is actually crossing the bar at this moment. I did not think I should be justified in refusing her the permission to enter."

The Emperor told us afterwards that never in all his life had he been so terribly alarmed.

My husband had heard the officers talking the matter over. Fearing that the ship would find it impossible to cross the bar successfully, they were discussing the measures to be taken in case of a wreck. "We must do our best to save the Empress, at all events," said one.

"Do not make too sure of accomplishing even that!" said another. And it seems that had the pilot allowed the ship to deviate in the slightest degree from the channel, we should have been irrevocably lost!

Even the Empress felt nervous when she stepped on shore. Seeing the Emperor, she went straight up to him. "Our picnic has not been much of a success," said she.

I have never seen the Emperor really angry but once in my life. This time he was seriously put out and answered sharply: "There must be an end to these escapades—there have been far too many of them as it is."

I held my tongue out of respect to his Majesty, but I longed to back him up, for he was perfectly right in taking this line.

Looking like nothing on earth, our hair dishevelled and untidy, our wet dresses clinging to the poor bodies that had been tortured for so many long hours, we cut a sorry figure indeed as we entered the carriages which the kind Emperor had thoughtfully ordered for us at the same time as his own on the chance of our having been allowed to disembark at the little port of the Adour; and in this awful state we drove to the Villa Eugénie, where supper was awaiting us.

That meal will live in my memory to the end of my days. Anything more squalid than

our general appearance it is really impossible to conceive. Our clothes had been torn to rags, and involuntarily I thought of the supper mentioned in the Gospel where the guests consisted of tramps collected from the highways and by-ways. And yet these men and women were the flower of the Court ; the Court of Napoleon the Third, which was, with perfect justice, renowned throughout the world for its exclusive and supreme elegance !

What had become of the pretty muslin dress and the sky-blue slip of Countess Lise Przezdziencs ? And Madame Walewska's mauve gown ? Whither had flown the touching faith of Madame de la Bédoyère, who only a few moments before embarking had said, " This time, at all events, we are not likely to run the risk of being half killed *en route !*"

How crestfallen were Madame de la Poëze and Madame de Montebello, who so short a time ago had been in such ecstasies over her Majesty's " happy thought " !

As for poor Miss Vaughan, her mortification knew no bounds, for notwithstanding the fact that she was an Englishwoman, notwithstanding that she was so passionately fond of the sea, she was now obliged to admit that, all things considered, she did not care about it so *very* much after all !

But the men !—the men ! It is difficult to

describe what they looked like. At least I *can:* they looked like prehistoric monsters, neither more nor less.

We did not reach home till four o'clock that morning, when we tumbled into bed, thankful indeed that it was not the sea that was rocking us to sleep.

V

OFFICIAL RECEPTION AS AMBASSADRESS TO THE COURT OF NAPOLEON III

(*Paris*, 1859.)

My husband was accredited Ambassador to the Emperor Napoleon III in the month of December, 1859. The official reception took place with great pomp towards the middle of the month, at the Palace of the Tuileries, and two days later I also had the honour of being received by their Majesties. The same ceremonies were observed at the official reception of Ambassadresses, and on the appointed day several State carriages were sent to fetch me at the Embassy, which in those days was situated at 89 Rue de Grenelle. We were living there only temporarily. The house, which belonged to the Prince de Beauffremont Courtenay, was a beautiful one, but to settle down definitely in it was out of the question, as it was far too small. The Prince himself inhabited the *rez-de-chaussée*, and we the first floor; but notwithstanding the fact that we had also taken a wing of the house that looked on to the courtyard, we were still short of room.

I had just put the last finishing touches to my toilet. My gown, to which a long train was attached, was made of mauve moire antique and was trimmed with lace. I wore a good many jewels—a tiara on my head, and round my neck a diamond necklace with emerald pendants.

I had not been in the drawing-room for more than a few minutes when the great entrance gates were thrown open and several gala carriages drove into the courtyard. The next moment the following people were shown in : Madame de Sauley, one of the ladies of the Household ; Monsieur Feuillet de Conches, whose duty it was to present all Ambassadors accredited to his Majesty's Court ; two "aides de Cérémonie," and two of the Emperor's chamberlains. All these people bowed, and made low curtsies to me, and I of course curtsied in return. Monsieur Feuillet de Conches, coming up to me, said : "Madame l'Ambassadrice, their Imperial Majesties are expecting you at the Tuileries. Will you kindly come down to the carriage ?" One of the aides, whose name has escaped my memory, whispered to the *attaché* standing beside him : "But she is a mere girl, your Ambassadress !" I overheard this remark and could not help smiling, for he had escorted my husband to the Tuileries only two days previously, and as Richard was only twenty-nine

himself, it would have been rather odd, to say the least of it, had his wife been an old lady.

Presently we all went downstairs. I was so delighted at the idea of driving in one of those magnificent State carriages (the body of each carriage was almost entirely made of glass) that I could not help saying to Madame de Sauley as I sat down : "Oh, what fun this is!" Poor Madame de Sauley, to whom all this official drudgery was anything but new, was quite unable to share my enthusiasm. She was about double my age and was more or less palled as far as this sort of entertainment was concerned. The carriage was drawn by six horses, superbly harnessed ; they were driven by a coachman who sat on the box, but each pair was also led by grooms who walked on either side. Three lackeys stood on the step behind. The interior of the carriage was upholstered in white satin and gold braid, and an ermine rug was spread beneath our feet. Our carriage was followed by two others, and these were followed by our own large and empty yellow *coupé*.

Madame de Sauley was seated opposite to me. According to etiquette, I was seated alone at the back of the carriage, and in the middle of the seat. In spite of the intense cold there were crowds of people standing about the streets. A good many people I knew were waiting to see us pass, and I waved my

hand to them (this action of mine, they told me afterwards, had given them great importance in the eyes of the crowd). My husband, who was standing with several friends near the Arc de Triomphe in the Place du Carrousel, beneath which the carriages were obliged to pass, gave me a low and respectful bow, and I waved my hand to him. A man standing beside him said : "She seems to know you, Monsieur." Richard replied : "Yes—slightly." "Well," said the man, "she doesn't give herself any airs, I'll say that much for her."

Hardly had we passed beneath the Arc de Triomphe when the drummers stationed at intervals in the courtyard of the Tuileries beat a salute, and the flag was lowered. The carriage drew up before the entrance, and while the footmen were still assisting me to alight, the Grand Master of the Ceremonies, le Duc de Cambacères, came forward to meet me, accompanied by the Grand Chamberlain le Duc de Bassano, the Grand Ranger, the Prince de la Moskowa, and the Grand Equerry, General Fleury. I ascended the staircase between two rows of *cent-gardes* and was conducted to the drawing-room leading into the Throne-room. Le Duc de Cambacères announced my arrival to the Emperor, after which I was ushered into his Majesty's presence. He was standing at the foot of

the throne, surrounded by a group of chamberlains and officers. I made three low curtsies, and finally found myself face to face with the Emperor. He was kindness itself. He told me that the nomination of my husband had given him the greatest satisfaction, as he had always been anxious to see him accredited as Ambassador to France. He also paid me several charming little compliments, assuring me that he desired nothing more than to extend to me the very sincere friendship he entertained for my husband. "Both the Empress and myself," he added, "have a feeling of real affection for you." While the Emperor was saying all these nice things, I was thinking to myself that I must try and find some suitable words with which to thank him, unless I wished him to take me for a very badly brought up person, quite unfitted to hold so high a position. And as soon as he had finished addressing me, I made a little speech in which I expressed my profound and respectful gratitude, and, while assuring the Emperor of my devotion, I begged him to show us the same good-will in the future as he had already shown us in the past. The Emperor listened, smiling so kindly that not for one moment did I experience the slightest feeling of embarrassment. And then, giving me his hand, he said : "I will not detain you any longer, Madame l'Ambassadrice, for the

Empress is waiting to see you. I will therefore say farewell and *à revoir*,—and may it often be *à revoir*."

I again dropped three low curtsies, after which Count Bacciocchi and the Duc Tascher de la Pagérie led me to her Majesty. She was in one of the great drawing-rooms adjoining her private apartments, surrounded by Princess Essling, Mistress of the Robes, the Duchesse de Bassano, her lady-in-waiting, and six ladies of the Household.

The Empress looked radiantly beautiful. She wore a gown of pansy-coloured velvet embroidered in silver with a long train. The front of the gown was in white satin, and was similarly embroidered. A splendid tiara sat lightly on her golden hair, and her neck and the bodice of her dress was ablaze with diamonds.

After having curtsied three times in the same way that I had curtsied to the Emperor, she also addressed me in the most affectionate way, not omitting, however, to call me "Madame l'Ambassadrice" to lend an official character to the interview. I answered her to the best of my ability, and when I came to the conclusion of my little speech she said: "Will you kindly present the gentlemen of the Embassy to me?" I did so without making a single mistake. One is apt to forget the names of even one's best friends under such

circumstances, and it was by the merest chance that my memory did not completely fail me in the case of Baron von Münch, for I hesitated quite a little while before mentioning his name. As may be imagined, I was unmercifully teased on this subject when we got home.

After saying a few kind words to each of them, her Majesty turned to me, gave me her hand, and said in a low voice, so as not to be overheard: "Come and see me to-morrow, between two and three o'clock." She then made the curtsey for which she was so justly celebrated, the curtsey whose secret seemed known to her alone, and we all retired. The same ceremony was observed on our departure as on our arrival; the drums beat the same salute, and the flag was lowered as before. Again I let the window down and bowed to everyone, and—frozen to the bone, I returned to the Embassy.

Next morning I awoke with a quinsy. I was very ill for a week and suffered a good deal. Their Majesties sent constantly to inquire after me, and of course I was unable to keep my appointment next day with the Empress. I went to see her as soon as I was allowed out. She told me how truly grieved she was to think I had taken cold. "You ought to have wrapped yourself up in a fur coat," she added; "those State carriages

are abominably cold, far colder than any others."

She then took me into her own little study and we sat by the fire and had a talk. "Good heavens," she said, "how terribly ceremonious we were the other day! By the way I addressed you as 'Madame l'Ambassadrice' at every moment, one would have thought we had never seen each other before. However, I must say I think we both came through the ordeal with great credit."

While we were having tea, the door opened and the Emperor walked in. "Ah," he said, "how glad I am to see you up and about. Now tell the truth, did you not anathemise your official reception?" "Not at all," I answered, "and I thoroughly enjoyed my drive in that beautiful carriage. I shall never have such another opportunity, and I would ask nothing better than to go through the whole ceremony all over again from beginning to end!"

"Well," said the Emperor, "I suppose one can accustom oneself to anything, but I can assure you that were you obliged to drive in a carriage and six, at a walking pace, even for a week, at the end of that time you would be clamouring for a cab, or any other ramshackle vehicle, for all you were worth. But now, before I forget, let me compliment you on your eloquence; I felt quite nervous lest you

should not be able to answer me. I am not easily put out of countenance, but I must confess that my heart stands still when, in the midst of a harangue, the speaker loses the thread of his discourse and begins to stammer and stutter. By the way, the Empress must tell you about the Grand Audience that took place when she accepted the presidency of the 'Société Maternelle.'"

I have told the story of this Grand Audience in another chapter bearing the title, "Reception of the 'Société de la Charité Maternelle' at the Palace of the Tuileries."

VI

WORTH

One day I was sitting quietly in my boudoir, enjoying a book, when my maid came in with an album in her hand. I asked her what she wished to show me; she answered:

"There is a young woman upstairs who has begged me to ask your Highness to look at the sketches in this book; they are designs for dresses, and are the work of her husband. He is extremely anxious to make a gown for you, no matter at what price, provided you allow him to do so."

"What is this man's name?" I inquired.

"His name is Worth, and he is an Englishman."

"An Englishman!" I cried. "He must be bold indeed if he contemplates dressmaking here, in Paris. The idea is absurd. Nothing will induce me to have anything to do with him."

"Nevertheless your Highness would do well to glance at these sketches," said my maid. "To my mind they are very charming."

"Oh, well," said I, impatiently, "let me have a look at them, but I doubt whether your Englishman's designs are at all likely to appeal to me."

I opened the album, and to my surprise saw the sketch of a fascinating gown on the first page, of an exquisite one on the next. "Here's an artist," I thought to myself. To the maid I said:

"Bring this Englishwoman to see me."

"She is pure French," said the maid. "There is nothing English about her."

After a few minutes Madame Worth made her appearance. She was a timid, modest woman who blushed when she spoke. She told me that her husband had been head man at Gazelin's, the famous dressmaker of that period, and that he had just set up an establishment at No. 7 Rue de la Paix with a Swede, a certain Bobergh. Both of them were anxious to number me among their clients, and if I would order a gown from them I should be at perfect liberty to fix my own price. I told her I would give them an order for two gowns, one for morning, the other for evening wear; they were to cost six hundred francs, that is to say, three hundred francs apiece.

Madame Worth was overjoyed. The evening gown was to be worn at a ball that was shortly to take place at the Tuileries.

Towards the end of the week, after one fitting (I dwell especially on the fact of this one fitting, as it was usual to try on five or six times at other places), the two dresses were sent home. They were absolutely perfect. I sent my warmest congratulations to the artist who had designed them ; I did not know him personally. The fittings had taken place at my own house.

On the following Wednesday there was a great ball at the Tuileries. It was given in the "Salle des Maréchaux." I wore my Worth dress, and can say with truth that I have never seen a more beautiful gown, or one that fitted more beautifully. It was made of white tulle strewn with tiny silver discs (a fashion which, just then, was at its height), and trimmed with crimson-hearted daisies that nestled among little tufts of feathery grass ; these flowers were all veiled in tulle. A broad white satin sash was folded round my waist. I wore all my diamonds, and—Worth scored his first success.

Hardly had the Empress entered the Throne-room, where the entire Diplomatic Corps was assembled, than she immediately noticed my dress, recognising at a glance that a master-hand had been at work.

"Your dress is lovely," said she, "it is perfectly charming. Who made it ?"

"An Englishman, Madame, a new star

that has suddenly arisen in the firmament of Fashion."

"Well," said the Empress, "the new star must be provided with satellites, so will you kindly ask him to come and see me to-morrow at ten o'clock?"

Worth was launched, and I was done for; no dress costing three hundred francs ever again saw the light of day.

But if he was dear—horribly dear, monstrously dear—at least he was grateful, and I must say, to his honour, that I have very seldom met anyone in whom the sense of gratitude was developed to such a degree. Never for one moment did he forget that he owed his reputation to me; nor did he ever neglect any opportunity which enabled him to prove the deep sincerity of his devotion.

He was very much attached to the Empress, and, after the downfall of the Empire, he made no secret of his sympathy with the Imperial régime. A fine example to those fair-weather friends who found it easier to forget than to remember the countless benefits showered upon themselves and their relations by the Emperor when he was in power. Yet by declaring himself an Imperialist Worth certainly ran more risks than they did. After all, the mere fact of owning a shop means that one is obliged to reckon with the possibility, in certain circumstances, of smashed windows.

It was this abiding sense of fidelity and gratitude on the part of "ce bon Monsieur Worth," as we all called him, that made it possible for me, at any rate, to overlook certain absurd little airs which he gave himself, to say nothing of the rather overbearing attitude he was pleased to assume when it was a question of creating a *toilette à sensation.*

Another thing that attracted me to him was his undeniable cleverness and his admirable common sense. His judgment on men, events, and things in general was extraordinarily sound. His origin was such that it led him quite naturally to become a ladies' dressmaker, but in any circumstances he would always have stood out from the crowd, would always have made his mark. A conversation with him amounted to a real pleasure. He had a rare insight into women—an unerring instinct where they were concerned. I may be laughed at for saying this, but what does it matter? He would sometimes say: "Madame —— is quite a decent sort of woman, but she has no more brains than a linnet. She thinks that beautiful clothes are in themselves quite sufficient to make a woman look distinguished. She doesn't realise that it is perfectly impossible to disguise the fact that she is middle-class from top to toe, no matter how exquisitely she may be dressed by me."

One day Princess Lori Schwarzenberg came

to see him. He had never set eyes on her, for she had only just arrived in Paris. She was quite simply dressed, but made an immediate impression on Worth, who, turning to his first hand, Carlsson—a type of man no longer in existence—said : " There is a *grande dame* for you, if you like. I can see it by the way she carries her head." Going up to her, a thing he never did unless his clients had been properly introduced to him, he asked her what he could do for her.

" I am Princess Schwarzenberg," said she, " and I have come to ask you to make me two really charming costumes for morning wear. Make them as you think best. Will you kindly ask someone to take my measures ? "

After she had gone Worth said to Carlsson (who repeated it to me) : " There—that is the way great ladies give their orders. What a difference between them and those parvenus who never know their own minds. They make me tired."

He had a perfect passion for distinction and *le grand air*.

His health was far from satisfactory and he was constantly ill. These breakdowns made us despair, for they invariably occurred at the wrong moment, and really amounted to catastrophes when they coincided with the great fancy balls that were given so frequently during the Empire.

Worth composed toilettes that were really dazzling, but he had a way of altering certain little details up to the very last moment. He would change this, and that, sometimes declaring that even one's hair was to be dressed in an entirely different way ; insisting, in fact, on those finishing touches which he, the creator and artist, held to be indispensable.

On one occasion when we had all met at the Rue de la Paix to try on our dresses for the fancy ball that was to take place that very night at the Tuileries, we were told that Worth had a bad headache and had retired to his own apartments. We were quite desperate. What was to be done ? No one had the faintest idea how the costumes were to be worn. The young women assistants stood round us like so many logs, unable to supply any information whatsoever. The workwomen were no better. Skirts, sleeves, bodices had all been made by different people in separate workrooms. What on earth were we to do ?

I finally took my courage in both hands and determined to beard the lion in his den. Climbing up to his private apartment, which was situated on the second floor, looking on to the court, I literally burst into his room, where I found him lying on a sofa with bandages tied round his head and over his eyes. I told him he really must pull himself together and

make an effort to see us, that he owed it to me not to leave us in the lurch, that he owed it still more to the Empress, who had invited us to the ball. At last he gave his consent. In a voice that was scarcely audible he murmured, "Put on your costumes and come up here." We hastened to do so, and one by one he inspected us all. The *première* stood by his side, whispering the name of each woman, as her turn came round. Lifting the bandage from his eyes he carefully examined the unfortunate creature who stood before him, muttering at intervals: "Hideous!" "Ridiculous!" "Appalling!"

We were quite desperate. At last I had a brain-wave; a great idea—great as the universe itself—flashed into my mind.

"Monsieur Worth," I cried, "you are signing the death-warrant of your reputation to-day."

At these words he leaped off the sofa, tore off his bandages, and marching us downstairs, as though we were his troops and he our general, which as a matter of fact was really the case—"Allons! En avant!" he cried. "Well, life has its compensations after all."

Before an hour had elapsed, everything was in order, and that night at the Tuileries no one would have suspected that there had ever been the slightest hitch.

Having accumulated a vast fortune with

marvellous rapidity, Worth decided to settle down at Suresnes, in the vicinity of Paris. From there he was able to reach the Rue de la Paix at ten o'clock a.m., returning home at about six o'clock in the evening.

One day I expressed a wish to see his villa. I had been told that it had been arranged with great taste and furnished with marvellous luxury. But Worth's good taste seems to have been limited. He really had very little outside his own particular profession. The villa at Suresnes, which he had had enlarged, adding a wing here and a wing there, gave one the impression of a confused agglomeration of buildings erected on a site far too small to contain them—each one spoiling the effect of the others. From among the debris at the Tuileries he had acquired great blocks of stone and stray pieces of sculpture. With these he had erected a sort of ruin which stood in the midst of all these buildings. Placed as it was, the effect of this ruin was absolutely disastrous, for it overpowered and crushed everything that surrounded it. The rooms were magnificently furnished, but I must say I would far rather have lived in a whitewashed garret than in a certain drawing-room which was the pride of poor Worth's life. It was one mass of gold, satin, plush, embroideries, etc.; every chair was edged with gilt, and there were knick-knacks without end.

Following Gambetta's example, he had had an enormous silver bath fitted in his dressing-room, while a fountain of eau-de-Cologne played continuously in the adjoining room.

The garden was beautifully kept, and contained an abundance of flowers and fruit. What struck me in particular were the thick groves of trees, among which lilies, roses, irises and cornflowers had been allowed to grow. It was the first time I had seen anything of the sort. The effect of these flowers seen through the green branches was quite charming.

Visitors to Suresnes were always asked to stay to luncheon, and they never regretted doing so, for the food was always remarkably good. It was sometimes served in the garden and sometimes in the really magnificent dining-room. The tea-service was in Vermeil, and the footmen wore knee-breeches and silk stockings, just like the servants of any other great house. In a word, everything was done extremely well.

The master of the house did the honours quite simply. He never posed. His wife, on the contrary, was rather affected and tried to play the *grande dame*. The sons, who inherited the business at their father's death, were modest lads who kept in the background. They have followed in their father's footsteps and honour his memory in a very touching way. Every

year, on Palm Sunday, they still send me (as their father did before them) a piece of box-wood blessed at Sainte Clotilde, which was our parish church when we lived in the Rue de Grenelle.

Just one last word.

We gave a big ball in 1867, which was the year of the Great Exhibition. The newspapers were full of the magnificence of this fête, speaking eloquently of the good taste with which it had been conducted, of the successful way in which I had done the honours, etc., etc. I saw old M. Worth shortly afterwards; he also congratulated me warmly on the great success of my ball, then, looking affectionately at me, he cried: "And to think it was I who invented you!"

Perhaps that is quite true.

VII

HOW —— WAS CARRIED OFF IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT

We spent the month of June 1863 at the palace of Fontainebleau, where their Majesties were in residence. They went there every year. Guests were invited for a week, sometimes for a fortnight at a time. On this occasion there were about sixty of us, including ladies and gentlemen in waiting, ladies of the household, chamberlains, equerries, etc.

One day my husband and I were on our way to the drawing-room where the guests always assembled before luncheon, when we heard loud peals of laughter coming from that direction. Curious about the cause of this unusual outburst of hilarity, we hastened in. We then heard the following story, which is absolutely true.

On the previous night as the Emperor Napoleon III was just about to fall asleep, he was roused by a great noise overhead. He thought a dance was going on. The crystal chandeliers that hung from the ceiling jangled incessantly, and there was a continual jumping up and down which occasionally came to a

dead stop and then went on more violently than ever. The bumping and thumping at last became intolerable.

"What on earth can be going on upstairs?" thought the Emperor. "Who the devil is in the room above me!"

His Majesty was extremely kind-hearted and indulgent to all those who served him, and he hesitated before ringing up his valet, who was asleep. Making up his mind not to disturb him, he resolutely turned his face to the wall and was just about to fall asleep when the infernal saraband began all over again.

Well, it is one thing to be kind-hearted, and another to be kept awake all night. The Emperor rang his bell. The valet appeared almost immediately.

"Please find out what is going on upstairs. Who is occupying the room overhead?"

"I really do not know, your Majesty."

"Well, go up and tell whoever is in that room to have the kindness to stop making such a horrible noise."

"I will at once inform your Majesty's aide-de-camp," answered the valet, "for I do not know my way to that room."

"Very well," said the Emperor. "But make haste, for the whole thing is beginning over again. I cannot conceive what it is, and should like to know the cause of this disturb-

ance." The valet hurried off to wake the aide-de-camp. He told him what was going on and gave him the Emperor's message.

"But I know perfectly well who is occupying that room," said the aide-de-camp. "It is X——, one of the officers of the day. He has evidently taken leave of his senses. I will look into this matter at once." So saying he threw on his clothes and hurried upstairs. He was still in the passage when he heard a regular scrimmage going on in the room to which he was making his way. He knocked at the door.

There was a sound of something like terror in the hoarse voice that asked, "Who is there?"

"The Emperor's aide-de-camp. I have come by order of his Majesty. Please let me in."

Poor X—— was as white as a sheet, and but scantily attired when he opened the door. The Emperor's message was duly delivered and he was informed that his Majesty, being unable to sleep, desired the occupant of the room overhead to put an immediate end to the outrageous noise that was going on.

The wretched man, without one word of explanation, answered in a voice full of alarm: "What can I do? I only wish it were possible; but I *cannot* keep her quiet." The Emperor's aide-de-camp said firmly:

"You must insist on her behaving herself, and to begin with, this abominable racket must cease at once. It is perfectly scandalous. It will be impossible to prevent a certain amount of gossip. And what will everybody say when it all comes out?"

"They will say whatever they like," answered the poor man desperately; "they will probably say I was a perfect fool to bring her here."

"My poor friend," replied the aide-de-camp, "they will say a good deal more than that. Your conduct is bound to raise a perfect storm of indignation. You might at least have had the decency to engage a room for her at the hotel."

"I like that. Why, she can't be left alone for one single solitary moment. There she goes again, leaping all over the place. Excuse me, I must return to her at once. Do you hear what she is doing?"

"I should rather think I did," exclaimed the aide-de-camp. Then, his interest being roused, he whispered: "Tell me, is she good-looking?"

"Good-looking! She is superb. She is a perfect beauty. Would you like to have a look at her?"

Astonished beyond words, but now quite overcome by curiosity—after all, a man is a man, and there is the end of it — the

messenger of his Imperial Majesty owned that he would like nothing better, though, with a last scruple, he added : " I say, you are quite sure she won't object ? "

" Object ! My dear fellow, it will be a matter of perfect indifference to her ; " and taking his friend by the arm he led him up to the four-poster on tip-toe. Softly drawing the curtains aside he said, " There she is ! " To the aide-de-camp's utter stupefaction he found himself opposite a tub of water in which a gigantic carp lay kicking and plunging about for all it was worth. His astonishment knew no bounds. He had expected to find something more interesting than that.

Furious at being so completely taken in, he turned upon his friend and asked for an immediate explanation. What did he mean by absconding with a carp ?

Poor X—— was by this time feeling not only ashamed but downright guilty. He decided to make a clean breast of it. He was passionately fond of fishing. Finding himself every day opposite the pond where the world-renowned carp were preserved, he succumbed to temptation ; he also wanted to see for himself whether it were true that some of them wore rings round their necks bearing the date 1530 ! ! !

It was strictly forbidden to fish in this pond ; those who infringed this order were condemned

either to pay an enormous fine or to suffer imprisonment.

After dinner he had slipped out to inspect a net which he had spread that morning at daybreak. To his delight it contained a carp, and one of these rings was actually round its neck. He had smuggled it into his bedroom so as to examine it at his ease, put it into a tub of water, but as the fish was so enormous, it leaped out of it with the greatest ease at every instant. Scared at the mere possibility of the creature dying on his hands, he had spent the whole evening getting it back into the tub, and had at last hoisted both tub and carp on to his bed, intending to return the carp to its native waters at cockcrow.

After this confession, the repentant sinner and the aide-de-camp took up the tub between them and left the room on tip-toe ; they had decided on banishing the culprit to some far-distant corner of the house.

After this had been accomplished the aide-de-camp got hold of the Emperor's valet and told him to let his Majesty know that everything had been satisfactorily settled. The valet informed the Emperor that there would be no repetition of the noises that had disturbed him, adding, " It seems that M. X—— had a carp in his room."

" Ah," said the Emperor, laughing, " is that the name they go by nowadays ? "

Next day his Majesty was informed of what had really taken place. The terrible adventure was recorded *en détail*. He was very much amused, and the only punishment he inflicted on this "Don Juan au carpes," as he was called from that day forward, was to make him tell the whole story from beginning to end to every guest in the house.

The unmerciful way in which he was chaffed upon his truly original love-affair can be more easily imagined than described. And now there is nothing on earth he hates like carp !

VIII

DONNA MARIA PIA, QUEEN OF PORTUGAL

Among the many royalties it has been my lot to meet in Paris—and elsewhere—their Majesties Dom Luiz and Donna Maria Pia of Portugal stand out in bold relief, for they made on me an impression that nothing on earth will ever be able to wipe out.

Their Majesties visited Paris in the year 1867. While there they had no desire to remain incognito—a privilege which most simple mortals appreciate to the full. The consequence was that my husband and I, with all our colleagues, found ourselves obliged to ask for an official audience. And thus it happened that one fine day the entire Diplomatic Corps, in gala carriages, drove up to Hôtel Vendôme, Place Vendôme, at twelve o'clock precisely. I must confess that the honour in store for us had not sweetened our tempers. The Ambassadors had been received on the previous day by the King, and now, accompanied by their wives, they were to visit the Queen. We were all magnificently dressed and the men were in full uniform.

Presently we found ourselves in a drawing-room where we were received by various Portuguese grandees, who, I am afraid, did not awaken in us a profound feeling of respect. Among them were two thin little ladies-in-waiting. Both of them had yellow complexions. I can still see the lilac silk dresses and the straw-coloured gloves they wore that day. Both of them were overcome by shyness and timidity to a degree that I am positively certain no modern lady's-maid has ever felt.

But perhaps they had been vouchsafed a vision of the drama that was shortly to take place !

We had not waited more than a few minutes when a quince-coloured Portuguese gentleman approached Lord Cowley, the British Ambassador, and the oldest person present. Bowing low he said, "La Majesté vous attend."

Lord Cowley begged the ladies to lead the way. We did so, the men following immediately after us.

The Queen was standing at the end of the long drawing-room with her back to a sofa. A row of chairs had been placed on either side. In fact the situation was as full of charm as such situations usually are.

Her Majesty bowed. We bowed. We dived to the ground so often that it is my belief we shrank to half our size.

Then her Majesty sat down. And we sat down.

Not one word passed her lips. Rather nervously we raised our eyes. The Queen was certainly sitting down, but she looked as though she had accomplished this feat without moving either hand or foot. And there she continued to sit, silent as the grave.

Her lovely blue eyes, shaded by golden-brown eyelashes, were fixed on the floor. When she did raise them for a second or so it was only to cast frightened glances round the room. She was deadly pale ; even her beautiful auburn hair seemed to be losing its colour with every passing moment !

Poor unfortunate woman. And there are actually people still alive who talk of being "as happy as a queen."

I can bear witness to the fact that during this interview Donna Maria Pia most emphatically did not appreciate the privileges of her exalted rank. She fidgeted with her gloves and moistened her lips in the vain effort to force a word or two past them. And so deadly did the silence become in that horrible drawing-room that one would have been startled by the mere fluttering of a gnat's wings. I would have bartered the kingdom of Portugal from one end to the other for the sake of one word ! Good heavens ! What was to

prevent this appalling situation going on to the end of time?

As this thought struck me I suddenly realised that should anything happen containing the slightest touch of humour, I should be done for. I knew that I should laugh, and that, once started, nothing under the sun would be able to stop me until I had exhausted myself.

It was just then that I heard a little noise; a little rumbling noise. I happened to be seated next Lady Cowley, the British Ambassadress, and realised in the twinkling of an eye that this little noise was taking place in that part of her Excellency's body which the English of the present day have unanimously agreed to call "Little Mary." Well, we were in for it now, there was no help for it! As a matter of fact, not one note of this untimely little "song without words" would have been audible had it not been for the abominable silence that brooded over all. Would no one have the courage to break it, to drop a handkerchief—a fan?

No. Not one of us had the courage to do anything of the kind. The only thing that happened was that the Queen rolled her gloves into a very tight little ball.

Our feelings can be imagined when Lady Cowley's "Little Mary" suddenly threw etiquette to the four winds of heaven and

merrily executed a roulade upon which any flute-player alive might have congratulated himself. That was the last straw ! I laughed till I thought I should have died. My colleagues were indignant, and hurled at me glances of absolute fury. But old Lord Cowley behaved as badly as I did ! He laughed till he cried. He positively brayed ! And it was just as impossible to stop him as it was to stop me. At last matters arrived at such a pitch that everyone rose *en masse* and made a rush for the door. Anyone not in the know would certainly have thought that the house was on fire, and that we were all tumbling over each other in a desperate attempt to get out and save our lives.

In the waiting-room, where a whole crowd of Portuguese were collected, the laughter became general. Lord Cowley, who like most of his compatriots was as a rule quite capable of controlling his feelings, did not even make an effort to do so on this occasion. He flung himself on to a sofa and there he lay roaring with laughter. "Really, really," he cried, "this is positively the last thing that any human being could have foreseen."

I can't conceive how we got out of that hotel and into our carriages ; nor can I imagine how we escaped being hooted by the multitudes who were standing outside waiting to see us take our departure.

Donna Maria Pia, Queen of Portugal

There was a ball at the Tuileries that night. The beautiful auburn-haired Queen was present. She spoke to nobody, and again she worried her gloves into a tight little ball.

The King came up to me and said very kindly, "The Queen was delighted to see you this morning."

I answered, "And we were all very much touched by the charming way she received us."

And that is the sort of thing that does duty for truth, when sovereigns and diplomatists engage in conversation.

IX

KING LUDWIG I OF BAVARIA

(*Paris*, 1867.)

EVER since I can remember, I took the liveliest interest in King Ludwig I of Bavaria, whose eccentricities were known all over Europe; even as a child I delighted in the stories I heard about him, for they never failed to make me laugh. And now at last I was to have an opportunity of meeting him, for he was coming to Paris for a few days to visit the Exhibition.

I was presented to him at St. Cloud, where their Majesties were in residence, and where a large party was being held in his honour. The Comédie Française was giving a performance of *La nuit d'Octobre* (by Alfred de Musset) in the vast "Salon d'honneur"—Mademoiselle Favart and Mademoiselle Delaunay were acting in it. But before proceeding to the great saloon, the sovereigns held a reception, and well do I remember the general consternation that followed upon the entrance of King Ludwig.

The Emperor Napoleon, accompanied by

all his Ministers, advanced to meet him. "May I be allowed to present these gentlemen to your Majesty?" he asked. The King without a moment's hesitation replied: "Certainly not! It would bore me to death!" The Emperor roared with laughter, but the Ministers grouped around him, who happened to be wreathed in smiles for the occasion, returned to their places looking uncommonly small!

The King always talked at the top of his voice, and one could always hear every word he said from one end of the room to the other. As he was extremely deaf, it was necessary to raise one's voice very high when answering his questions. This was distinctly embarrassing at times, and one was really on tenterhooks when obliged to converse with him.

Alas, he never treated me to any of his plain speaking, a fact I regret more than I can say, for I had made up my mind to give him tit for tat, and to show him quite plainly that it was not so easy to succeed in putting me out of countenance. On the contrary, he spoke very amiably to me about my grandfather, for whom he professed a particular veneration.

One day we were dining at St. Cloud with him, when he suddenly began to talk Spanish with the Empress; it appears that he talked absolute gibberish, and the Empress laughed

till the tears rolled down her face. But he was not to be put off. "I adore Spain!" he exclaimed; "I adore the Spanish language! I adore and have always adored the women of Spain!"

Now he was getting on to dangerous ground, and the Empress, recollecting his love-affair with Lola Montez, did nothing to encourage the royal rhapsodies. I do not know whether he realised what was passing through her mind, but he must have seen that all of us were ill at ease, and he immediately took advantage of the general silence to say in a loud voice: "Ah, there is very little I *don't* know about the women of Spain; one of them cost me my crown!"

The horror of everyone present can be imagined! No one knew what line to take. To laugh would have been out of place, and as no one dreamed of weeping as a possible alternative, we simply held our peace and buried our faces in our plates. All the same, most of us were biting our lips to prevent an outburst of laughter.

The Archduke Karl Ludwig was one of the guests at this dinner; he was a brother of the Emperor of Austria. He could not get over his uncle's plain speaking, and with the object of turning his thoughts in another direction he alluded to the death of his son, the King of Greece, saying how much he had felt it himself.

"Yes, yes," said King Ludwig, "but I suppose you will not deny that it would have been difficult to govern the country more inefficiently!"

This cynically brutal remark cast a chill over the whole party. Turning to me, the Archduke said: "My uncle is impossible, and one really lives in dread at the mere idea of what he may say next." He then told me several anecdotes about him. They were amusing enough. Here is one of them.

One day the King was walking about the streets of Munich, when he met a lady of his acquaintance. She had come to the capital with her three daughters for the purpose of taking them into society. He stopped her, and after a few minutes' conversation, turned to the three young girls who were standing timidly behind their mother. Coolly raising the rather thick veils they were wearing over their faces, he examined each one in turn.

"They may be very good girls," said he, "but they are remarkably ugly ones!"

The King was a passionate lover of feminine beauty and had set up a *Galérie de beauté* in his own palace. It was one of the best-known sights of Munich. He managed to get hold of every pretty woman who happened to be passing through the town, and never rested till he had persuaded her to sit for her portrait.

A certain Stieler was commissioned to paint these pictures ; from an artistic point of view many of them were mere daubs, though they gave a very fair idea of the sitter's beauty.

The Empress Caroline, widow of the Emperor Francis, and sister to King Ludwig, was very much upset by her brother's constant misbehaviour. During his love-affair with Lola Montez she ordered prayers to be said at the Church of St. Stephen "*on behalf of an unregenerate old gentleman !*" All Vienna knew to whom allusion was being made, and I am afraid that people laughed a good deal more than they prayed.

King Ludwig was still in Paris when the Emperor of Austria arrived. He was one of the guests at the splendid and never-to-be-forgotten banquet that was given at the Hôtel de Ville. The sovereigns sat at a table arranged on a daïs in the centre of the *Salle des fêtes*. The Emperor of Austria sat opposite Napoleon III, the Queen of the Netherlands sat on his right, and the King of Bavaria on his left. I had the honour of sitting next the latter. All of a sudden, he turned to the Emperor Napoleon and said :

" By the way, I was a great friend of your father, King Louis, when he was at the Hague ! "

He spoke, as usual, at the top of his voice, and naturally Queen Sophie heard every word

he said and so did everyone else. The Emperor looked embarrassed, and realising that matters might easily take a dangerous turn, he endeavoured to lead the conversation on to less slippery ground, but his efforts were unsuccessful.

"No need to distress yourself," roared his Majesty ; "one nail drives out the other !"

Notwithstanding the ceremonious character of the banquet, everyone began to laugh ; it really was the only thing to do.

After dinner the sovereigns and their consorts retired to one of the adjoining drawing-rooms and held a reception. In the first room were various princes and princesses, the Diplomatic Corps, and all the Ministers.

King Ludwig walked up to me and said : "Who is that talking to Prince von Metternich ?"

"Sire, that is Prince Joachim Murat."

"What ?"

I raised my voice : "It is Prince Joachim Murat, Sire."

"I can't hear a word you say ; please speak louder."

In despair I repeated the Prince's name, and this time I almost screamed it into his ear. Everybody was listening to us. There was a dead silence in the drawing-room except for the words that were passing between the King and myself.

His Majesty seemed greatly delighted when at last he grasped the name.

"Oh—Murat!" he exclaimed. "How well I remember the time when the tall Prince von Metternich was the lover of Queen Caroline!"

My husband had a sudden fit of modesty and cast his eyes to the ground.

Joachim Murat took it as a joke, and turning to Richard he said: "Well, as we cannot alter facts, we had better laugh at them!"

Before closing this little account of King Ludwig, I must say that he spoke French to perfection. He knew every shade of the language, and was not obliged to limit himself to his mother-tongue in order to make people thoroughly uncomfortable.

There was nothing distinguished in his outward appearance, and he dressed abominably; he looked like a shabby professor out of a job. In his old age he had grown very ugly and wore enormous magnifying glasses that quite disfigured him. He fully realised his own ugliness and would occasionally startle one by saying without rhyme or reason: "Perhaps you won't believe it, but I was a lovely child!"

One shook one's head—respectfully.

X

VISITS TO COMPIÈGNE

(1860–1869.)

EVERY year during the reign of the Emperor Napoleon III relays of visitors were invited to the Palace of Compiègne for a period of four weeks. The *séries*, as it was called, began on the 8th or 10th of November. About a hundred carefully selected people were invited, and it can easily be imagined how eagerly and how jealously these invitations were sought after.

Their Majesties were presented with the list of these chosen guests by the First Chamberlain, Count Bacciocchi, and would sometimes add to it certain names, striking out others, after which the invitations were sent out. The following was the formula adopted : "By order of their Imperial Majesties N. N. . . . is invited (or are invited) to spend a week at the Palace of Compiègne from the . . . November . . . to the . . . November. The visitors and their servants will travel by a special train, which will also bring their luggage. It will leave the Gare du Nord at three o'clock."

On the appointed day a long file of carriages deposited all these smart people at the above-named station. At Compiègne they were met by brakes, to which some of the most beautiful horses in the Imperial stables were harnessed. Starting at full gallop, we soon reached the Palace, where we found Count Bacciocchi standing at the head of the steps waiting to receive us. Dinner being served at 7.30 punctually, we were all instructed to appear in the drawing-room at 7.15, as their Majesties liked to greet each guest personally before sitting down to table. After this we were shown to our apartments.

The arrival of the luggage, which we always watched from our windows, was quite an affair. It was an entertainment at which everyone made a point of being present, and the rooms of those guests whose windows looked upon the entrance court were always invaded by those who had been given rooms on the opposite side. The luggage arrived in large vans about twenty minutes after the owners. It really was an extraordinary sight, and gave one the impression that all the inhabitants of Paris were, with one accord, removing from their homes. The number of trunks unloaded was enormous. One day, we counted as many as 900 ! The fact was that every woman had had each of her evening dresses packed up separately in a white wooden case similar to

those used by dressmakers for the delivery of their goods. (In order to ensure their arrival in perfect condition they had all been packed by the wonderful professional packers of Paris.) I was the proud possessor of eighteen of these cases ; other women, smarter than myself, boasted of twenty-four, and as we were about sixty people in all (including men and women), 900 pieces of luggage will not appear absolutely incredible ! The swarm of feverishly excited maids and valets, all screaming and shouting at the top of their voices and endeavouring to sort out the luggage, was something worth seeing. Some of the maids were dissolved in tears, others, whose hair was untidy, had lost their hats in the fray, and with clasped hands were imploring the Imperial servants to get hold of some special trunks. But when the ardently desired piece of luggage finally did make its appearance, having been dragged out from beneath a veritable mountain of other trunks, it was generally the signal for all the rest to come toppling down one after the other ! The poor wretch who had clamoured successfully for his or her luggage was immediately attacked by all the others and apostrophised in language that was anything but choice. It was really thrilling to watch them, and we had many a hearty laugh behind the windows while they fisticuffed and abused one another in the courtyard. From the very

first hour of arrival, all the servants were at daggers drawn and hated the very sight of one another.

While all these innumerable trunks and portmanteaux were being carried to their destination, tea was served, friends arranging to have it together in their various sitting-rooms. When it was time to dress, we separated, and at 7.15 we all went down to the drawing-room where the ladies and gentlemen of the Household were assembled. After the last guest had made his appearance, Count Bacciocchi went and informed their Majesties that everyone was down.

It is quite impossible to imagine a more attractive set of people than those who were gathered together in that first drawing-room. There was la Duchesse d'Albe—the Empress's sister—la Comtesse Walewska, la Comtesse de Persigny, la Comtesse de Morny, la Comtesse de Pourtalès, la Comtesse de la Bédoyère, la Baronne de la Poëze, la Marquise de Gallifet, la Baronne Alphonse de Rothschild, the Duchess of Sutherland, the Duchess of Manchester, in a word, all the youth and beauty of Paris, and some of the loveliest women of Europe besides. The most celebrated men of the political, literary and artistic world were also invited, each one in turn, to these famous *Séries de Compiègne*, of which it may truly be said that we shall never see the like again.

Men such as A. Dumas fils, Octave Feuillet, Edmond About, Gounod, the celebrated physician, Joubert de Lamballe, the painters Meissonnier and Jérôme, the barristers Lachaud and Chais d'Estange, were among those who frequented this most brilliant of Courts, without taking into account the many foreigners of distinction, the diplomatists accredited to the Court of Napoleon III, the Ministers of State, and a host of celebrities gathered together from the four quarters of the globe.

It is only an accomplished woman of the world, elevated to the throne, who could have succeeded in gathering such people round her. A princess of the blood could never have been—never will be—equally successful. An intimate knowledge of the world, and exquisite tact, allied to sovereign power, are necessary to obtain such a result ; and if it is an art in itself to bring the right people together, people who, by virtue of their outstanding personality, the brilliancy and wit of their conversation, their beauty, their elegance, their irresistible vitality, are able to ensure the complete success of gatherings such as these, it is at the same time an enormous advantage to know for certain that none of one's invitations run the slightest risk of being refused ! Princesses of the blood have not the knowledge of the world and its ways that was possessed to such a degree

by the Empress Eugénie. Whatever they may say or do, they remain hybrid beings who create an atmosphere of constraint among others and are themselves self-conscious and constrained. I am now speaking of the royalties of my own time, for some time ago—to mention the Archduchess Sophie alone—there were many witty and delightful women among them, such as one never comes across nowadays.

But I must return to the drawing-room at Compiègne where we were all assembled to await their Majesties. The Empress, on entering the room, always made the celebrated curtsey which all of us—men and women—admired alike. It really was a miracle of grace and dignity impossible to surpass. I can still see her dressed as she was one day in white satin, in her hair the celebrated Regent diamond surmounted by a tuft of white feathers shimmering with diamonds ; round her neck three superb rows of pearls. I can still see her curtseying to her guests in the doorway. She was ideally beautiful, absolutely simple and natural, never posing for one moment as a beauty. After making this curtsey she would address a few words of welcome to each guest in turn. The Emperor did the same, without making any distinction between his visitors, after which, giving his arm to the Empress, he led the way

to the dining-room, which was situated at a very great distance from the drawing-room. The men offered us their arms, and we followed their Majesties across the vast hall, the guard-room and two other large rooms, situated between a hall and a number of empty drawing-rooms, to the immense dining-room, where the banquet was served. There were generally from eighty to a hundred guests, as residents of Compiègne and the neighbourhood, such as the Marquis and Marquise de l'Aigle, the General in command of the regiment quartered in the town, the colonels, and other functionaries, were often invited to dine with their Majesties.

When I was the only Ambassadress present I always sat on the Emperor's right hand, but if Lady Cowley was invited in the same *série* as myself, I sat on his left, as Lord Cowley had been accredited Ambassador long before my husband. I also sat on the left, if Princess Mathilde happened to be present, but this occurred only once, as far as I can remember.

The table presented a really magnificent sight. Though the Emperor possessed no real silver, and though everything, down to the coffee spoons, was of plated ware, every article in use was so exquisitely designed, was in such perfect taste, that the general effect was surprisingly beautiful. It was only by the merest chance that I learned from the

lips of the Emperor himself that there was nothing but plated ware on the table. Some of the guests were discussing a robbery that had taken place ; a splendid silver service had been stolen by the thieves. His Majesty, turning to me, said, laughing, " Their noses would be thoroughly put out of joint if they broke in here, for they would not find a single piece of silver if they searched the whole Palace." I looked incredulous and smiled ; the Emperor continued : " When I came to the throne there was no silver at all. I was asked to order some, but was really taken aback when I was told that it would be a matter of over five million francs. Without hesitating for a moment I ordered that everything should be made of plated ware ; it cost five or six thousand francs. You see," he added, " the silver services belonging to sovereigns too often find their way into the melting-pot at certain moments."

The Emperor chatted during dinner with the complete ease and absence of formality that never failed to endear him to everyone with whom he came in contact. He was really *Simpatico*, a great gentleman, in every sense of the word, there was about him not the slightest touch of the parvenu.

One evening at dinner, in the course of one of my visits to Compiègne, the conversation had become general, the Emperor and Empress,

who were sitting opposite each other, taking part in it as well as their guests. The discomforts and inconveniences of travelling were being discussed. The Emperor said he thought we were exaggerating a good deal. I ventured to remark—laughing as I did so—that his Majesty was hardly competent to give an opinion as far as *our* experiences were concerned, as all he had to do was to get into a special train, give any orders he pleased and take no further trouble about anything—not even having to consider the cost !

"I certainly travel very comfortably at present," answered the Emperor, "but you must not forget that I was not always in these circumstances. At one time I was so badly off that I could not afford even one servant, so naturally I always travelled alone, and I remember very well that one day—it was in America—I was obliged to carry my own trunk, and it was rather a heavy one, from the railway station to the harbour ; the heat was tropical. Now I am quite sure that none of you have been reduced to carrying your own luggage. Believe me, I know as much about the discomforts of a journey as most of you." He looked serious, even sad, as he added : "You must not forget, Princess, that I am a parvenu in the strictest sense of the word."

But at other times he would laugh like a child at some of the stories I told him. How

often have we not laughed helplessly together, and how often have I not been asked on leaving the table, "What in the world did you say to his Majesty to make him laugh like that?"

One evening, at dinner, I had helped myself to some food that was extremely nasty, to be quite frank. Without the slightest hesitation I put it out of my mouth. The Emperor saw what I had done and said, "Good heavens, is it as bad as all that?"

"Sire," I answered, "it is simply disgusting!"

"Well, I believe you are exaggerating; I shall judge for myself." So saying, he ordered the dish (which he had refused) to be brought round again and proceeded to help himself; but he did not swallow even the first mouthful, and hurriedly followed my example. "Well," said he, laughing, "my manners are evidently as bad as yours—we are a nice couple!"

The Empress wished to know what we were laughing at. "We cannot possibly tell you," said he; "if we did you would certainly turn us both out of the room." The Emperor always said "tu" to the Empress, but she always addressed him as "vous."

The food at Court was really excellent and there was plenty of it, but it was not of a very select kind. It was good wholesome food,

and I thoroughly enjoyed it and never wearied of it. If, for the space of a week or a fortnight, a hundred people or so were compelled to sit down to two elaborate meals a day, they would certainly lose their appetites long before the end of the visit.

Dinner at Compiègne never lasted more than an hour, and it was admirably served. The *préfet* of the Palace, old General Rollin, presided over everything and sat at the end of the table, where he gave his orders. The footmen were all powdered and their liveries were splendid.

At 8.30 there was the same procession back to the drawing-room, where coffee was served. After a few minutes the Emperor retired to his study to smoke his cigarette and the men went to the smoking-room. The Empress remained chatting with us. When, after a short interval, the gentlemen returned to the drawing-room, one of the chamberlains took his post beside a small upright piano, and, with a look of desperation on his face, began to turn the handle attached to it. We were obliged to dance to this hideous and monotonous music, for really to describe it as gay would be a stretch of the imagination amounting to impudence. These soirées, which lasted till about 11.30, were the least agreeable of our experiences at Compiègne. They bored us to death. "Oh, do tell me the

time," was the one thing whispered from one to the other.

On those evenings when the Emperor suggested dancing La Boulangère, or Sir Roger de Coverley, things went better, and better still when at other times we had charades or tableaux *vivants*, or when we got up little plays. Then we really enjoyed ourselves and an atmosphere of genuine gaiety reigned over all. The Emperor loved these little performances, and liked nothing better than to go behind the scenes to see what his "private actors" were doing. The actors of the Comédie Française went by the name of "Actors in ordinary to His Majesty," so we went by the name of "His Majesty's private actors."

How many delightful little plays were given in that drawing-room, where, at the far end of the room, a stage had been erected which was never removed. My husband always conducted the little orchestra, as the Empress did not care to have anyone present at these gatherings except her own guests, her object being to avoid all gossip and tittle-tattle.

As though she could have prevented anything of the sort! It was just the contrary that happened. People's imaginations ran riot and the most absolute and incredible nonsense was circulated about these gatherings at Compiègne. Had they been correctly reported

I can only say that there is not a mother alive who would not have allowed her daughter to read those reports. Prince Reuss and I, being only too well aware of all that was being said behind our backs, used to call the Compiègne gatherings "Sojourns in Sodom and Gomorrah." And when the Empress's chamberlain, Monsieur de Lezay Marnésie (who was as stiff as a poker and hated a joke like poison), stood up beside that dreadful piano, looking like a mute at a funeral, when he solemnly began to turn the handle, grinding out one frightful little tune after another, while two or three depressed couples spun round the room like low-spirited tops—when most of the other guests collapsed on to the hard little benches set round the room, yawning till they nearly dislocated their jaws, then Prince Reuss and I would glide up to each other, and raising our eyes to heaven we would whisper in horror-struck accents, "Sodom and Gomorrah!"

We once acted *Cæsar's Commentaries* on this little stage; it was a revue composed by the Marquis de Massa. It was really charming and had a great success. I took the part of a "Cantinière de Zouave," a cabman, and I also represented "La Chanson." I was made to repeat my songs twice and even thrice, and at the risk of seriously offending my innate sense of modesty I am bound to say I got through everything quite nicely. I have been

particularly successful as "La Chanson" from the time of its debut to the present day.

Madame de Pourtalès looked radiantly beautiful as "France," and Madame de Galliffet perfectly lovely as "England." The Prince Imperial was dressed like a Grenadier guardsman—he was a dear little boy.

One evening—it was the Empress's fête day—we acted charades. In the final tableau the Gods of Olympus were to be represented offering flowers to the sovereign. Octave Feuillet had composed the charade and I had organised the tableaux. I even acted the first scene with him. The word chosen was "Anniversaire"—*âne* (donkey), *hiver* (winter), *serre* (conservatory), and then the whole word.

That same evening I had a regular scene with Madame de Persigny, who sometimes behaved as if she had taken leave of her senses, and was often quite impossible to deal with. She was furious because I had arranged for her to appear in what she amiably called "Le tableau des laides"![1] As I happened to be taking part in that same tableau I said to her, "That isn't a very kind remark of yours. I am in that tableau myself, and so are many of the others." Exasperated to the last degree, she cried: "Isn't that *just* what I am saying? Can't you understand that I don't wish to appear in the 'Tableau des laides'?"

[1] N.B.—The tableau of ugly women.

"Well," said I, "all I can say is, that we have not the slightest desire to include a lunatic in *our* tableau, and as far as I am concerned you are at perfect liberty to do as you like."

The Empress, having expressed a desire to act with us, appeared one evening in a little two-act play written specially for her by Octave Feuillet. It was called *Les Portraits de la Marquise*. She looked quite delicious in the part, and there was a note of exquisite distinction in the way she acted it. Comte Charles de Talleyrand played the part of the chevalier who loved her. The play was very cleverly written; not once was he given the opportunity of declaring his feelings! But after his devotion had been revealed to the Marquise, after she had been told that he was about to ask for her hand, and just as the curtain was about to be let down, a friend, pointing to the door, said to her, "But there he is himself, and you will learn from his own lips how dear you are to him." The lover appeared in the doorway—overcome with emotion, he hesitated to advance—the curtain fell—and no more was said. Octave Feuillet had understood, with the exquisite tact that never failed him, that even on the stage the Empress must be treated as such. He was perfectly successful, and the little play lost nothing by the restrictions he imposed on

himself. It was a charming, delicate piece of work.

But now I must return to the drawing-room, where we were obliged to remain till it pleased her Majesty to retire. A tea-table was brought in. No one touched either the tea or the cakes. The Empress alone had a cup of tea poured out for her, to which were added some drops of orange-flower water. Then, with a few parting words to her guests, she left the room, after making the delicious —but welcome—curtsey which allowed us to retire. We did so with enthusiasm, and made hurriedly for our rooms. Not for the purpose of going to bed !—anything but that ! On the contrary, we used to foregather in one another's sitting-rooms, where we sat chatting and smoking (as was customary in Austria) till half-past one in the morning. It was then that we *really* enjoyed ourselves, with all due respect to their poor dear Majesties, who were under the impression that we were absolutely at our ease with them. And so we were up to a certain point ; but—one was at Court. A fixed etiquette reigned over everything, and one breathed more freely when one was among one's equals.

Every morning until midday, guests were free to do as they pleased ; but on the stroke of twelve we all assembled in the salon for luncheon. The dresses were perfectly simple,

and I am sure that people nowadays would be greatly astonished were they to see the little woollen costumes that were worn by the *élégantes* of the Second Empire. It was the Empress who set the fashion, and, according to her decree, all outdoor clothes were to be thoroughly practical and absolutely unpretentious. She herself always wore a woollen skirt—generally black—a red flannel shirt, and a leather belt round her waist, just as I saw her for the first time in Biarritz. We all followed her example.

At luncheon no account was taken of anyone's rank—one sat wherever one chose ; two places, however, were always reserved on the right and left hand of their Majesties, and were occupied by different people every day. In this way very great personages would often find themselves at the bottom of the table, while others, less important, sat in the places of honour. A great many dishes were served at luncheon, which, as a meal, was in my opinion superior to dinner. At one o'clock we returned to the drawing-room, where we made our plans for the afternoon.

Carriages were always ordered for two o'clock, when we generally went for a drive in the beautiful forest of Compiègne. The Emperor often took us over to Pierrefonds, which he had had restored by the celebrated architect Viollet-le-Duc, and in which a great

many very interesting things were to be seen. This gigantic Manor-house, which dated from feudal times, had been restored with brilliant success. The magnificent collection of armour acquired by his Majesty was kept in the great armoury of the castle. I believe it is still there, though it was the Emperor's private property. The Republic has taken good care not to return it to its rightful owner.

Monsieur Viollet-le-Duc, who according to all appearances was devoted to the Emperor, behaved with revolting ingratitude to him. After the fall of the Empire, he not only deserted him in the most cowardly and ignominious way, but slandered his former master and benefactor in terms that were positively ignoble. In spite of his great and indisputable genius, I doubt very much whether he would ever have had the opportunity of exercising it in the service of anyone else, or of amassing so great a fortune. His special gift was the reconstruction and restoration of the great monuments of bygone centuries.

Monsieur Viollet-le-Duc acted as prompter at our theatrical performances, and a more unmitigated and rampant snob never existed. He showered praises on everybody and everything, just as later on he dragged everybody and everything through the mud.

There were often shooting-parties and stag-hunting. These shoots were splendidly

organised, and the bag amounted continually to three thousand head, and sometimes even more.

The Emperor was a superb shot. He used to walk slowly along the rides, swaying slightly as was his wont, and he always raised his gun with the utmost coolness. He seldom missed. There were generally ten to twelve guns. Soldiers belonging to the regiment quartered at Compiègne acted as beaters, and seemed to get a good deal of fun out of it, chaffing each other unceasingly the whole time. The shooting-party had a picnic luncheon whenever it was convenient, and the soldiers also fared very well, as they were always provided with several large baskets stocked with food. The Emperor never failed to give each of them a cigar, and I believe that the days on which they acted as beaters were always looked upon as red-letter days. As to the hunting-parties, they were picturesque beyond words. Everyone was well mounted, the pack very fit, the huntsman and whips chosen from among the best in France.

This old-world French hunting is really a thing apart—it is unique of its kind, and differs absolutely from the hunting in England. Everything is carried out according to old-world custom. One must have seen with one's own eyes the masterful way in which the kennelmen controlled their bloodhounds

while sighting some seven-year-old stag in its covert; one must have seen them slip the hounds, and seen the marvellous way in which the whips at full gallop, blowing their horns, laid the hounds on the line of the stag, to appreciate at its full value the knowledge and skill of these men.

The Emperor and Empress always hunted twice a week. The men wore the Imperial colours—green coats braided with gold, red facings, white leather breeches, top-boots and three-cornered hats. The women wore green cloth riding-habits; the bodices were braided in gold with red facings, and like the men they wore three-cornered hats. The effect was charming. Those who did not care to ride, followed in brakes and sometimes arrived in time for the *hallali*. At the end of the run, the stag was killed by a rifle shot, and the Emperor presented a foot to one of the ladies present. I still possess one which was given me by his Majesty.

In the evening after dinner the *curée aux flambeaux* took place in the courtyard of the Palace. It was a very pretty sight.

The whips stood in the middle of the pack, holding the hounds on their leads. The first whip held the stag's head, to which only the hide was attached—this covered the carcase. On a signal from the huntsman the blood-hounds were slipped, and baying furiously they leaped at the carcase, which lay at the hunts-

man's feet. Before they were able to reach it, he checked them by raising his whip. He thus checked them twice, but the third time, springing to one side, he pulled away the head and hide, and in less time than it takes me to write about it they had devoured all that remained of the animal. During the whole *curée* the bugles never ceased blowing. I repeat what I said before—it was a very pretty sight.

But now I must return to what I was saying about our drives, or rather to what happened on our return from those drives. This was usually about tea-time, when some of the party were always invited to the Empress's private apartments (each guest was invited in turn). The tea-gown, included nowadays in every woman's wardrobe, was then unknown, and no change of dress was made. I can't say I regretted this fact, as we had otherwise quite enough changing of dress !

The Empress's teas lasted rather too long for my taste, and I must frankly confess that we all preferred having tea in our own apartments, with our own friends, seated by the fire and smoking our cigarettes. The Empress, notwithstanding her Spanish blood, had a holy horror of tobacco, and often told me that smoking was the one thing about me that she could not stand. She hated the smell of it, even at a distance. The Emperor alone, being her husband and a privileged person, smoked

in her presence whenever he chose, but it was taboo for the rest of us; even out-of-doors when driving behind their Majesties' carriage. As can easily be imagined, the lamentations about this hardship were loud and long.

On rainy days we generally rehearsed, but when it was fine and when we did not wish to forgo our afternoon drive, the rehearsals took place after tea.

At one of these rehearsals the little Prince Imperial was taking the part of a Grenadier guardsman—it was in *Les Commentaires de César*. He was to sing the well-known air, "Je te souviens, disait un capitaine," and was awaiting his turn to appear on the stage. As was very natural, he soon grew tired of standing in the wings doing nothing, so getting hold of a drum, he began to beat it with all his might. No one ventured to remonstrate. I had to go on a few moments later, but hardly had I got through my first sentence when another long roll of the drum was heard. I asked him to leave off; he did not take the slightest notice of my request, but went on drumming louder than ever. So I went straight up to him, and taking him by the arm I put him out of the room, saying, "Do not imagine that because you are the Prince Imperial, you have the right to annoy and worry everyone else; children who behave badly must be punished, especially if they happen to be princes, and that is why I am

going to punish you." He burst out crying. One or two of my friends told me that I ought not to have lost my temper to such a degree. I answered, "Well, it can't be helped now."

That same evening the Emperor came up to me twisting his moustache, and said, "It seems that you were rather down on Louis this afternoon—that you even turned him out of the room."

I said, "That is quite true, Sire, but I assure you that had I the honour of bringing him up, I should have treated him with far greater severity."

His Majesty answered, "Well, I am very much obliged to you—you were quite right; the little fellow shall ask you to forgive him."

And so he did. I gave him a kiss, and that was the end of it. Poor Prince Imperial! He reminded me of this incident some years later when we were both staying with the Empress at Arenenberg—he was about eighteen years old. "I have never forgotten the lecture you gave me that day," said he; "it opened my eyes to a good deal and did me a lot of good."

Every week a theatrical company came down from Paris to give a performance in the pretty little private theatre of the Palace. The favourite play of the day was always put on, but the companies of the Comédie Française, the Vaudeville, and the Gymnase were the only ones ever summoned to

Compiègne. The Imperial box was at the far end of the theatre, and was large enough to hold all the guests; it was really a sort of amphitheatre where fifty people could easily be accommodated. The Emperor and Empress occupied two seats in the middle of the box, and we grouped ourselves round them. The stalls, the small boxes and the galleries were filled to overflowing by people to whom Count Bacciocchi had sent cards of invitation, and who consisted of the principal residents of Compiègne and the neighbourhood.

Everyone wore full dress; though on a small scale, it was a brilliant scene. After the performance the artists were always invited to the Imperial box, where they were warmly congratulated by their Majesties.

An amusing incident took place one evening at the end of one of these performances. The curtain had just been dropped, the Emperor and Empress had risen from their chairs and were bowing to the audience, who in their turn were all making low obeisances, when the orchestra suddenly struck up the march from *Bluebeard*, "Quand un courtisan s'incline et courbe son échine." I could not help laughing so heartily that on leaving the theatre the Emperor asked me what had amused me so much.

"But surely," I answered, "your Majesty heard what the orchestra was playing."

"What *was* it playing?"

"Well, we were all bowing to the ground, and most certainly our spines were bent in two!"

"I really don't know what you mean," said the Emperor.

"Will your Majesty allow me to sing the words of that march from *Bluebeard?*"

"Certainly; though I cannot conceive what you are driving at."

I then hummed the song quite softly into his Majesty's ear, after which I said, "Well, that is what they have just been playing. It was not a very happy choice, was it?"

His Majesty sent for Count Bacciocchi. "Will you kindly ask the conductor from me whether he has taken leave of his senses, or whether he is simply impertinent? What was he dreaming about to play us the Courtier's Song from *Bluebeard?* It really was rather too much of a good thing."

My husband and I were alone in realising the conductor's blunder, for there never existed a set of people less musical than those attached to the Court of Napoleon III. Had you told them on that occasion that the march out of *Bluebeard* was an air from the *Favorita* they would certainly have believed you.

As the *série* was drawing to its close—that is to say, towards the end of the week for which one had been invited to stay at the

Palace—a knock was often heard at the door of one's apartment, and Count Bacciocchi would appear, bearing a message from their Majesties requesting one to prolong one's stay for another week. One tendered one's respectful thanks for so signal a favour, but all the same one did a little private grumbling after his departure. The fact is, it was really dreadfully tiring to go through a fortnight on end of undiluted gaieties, and on one's return to Paris, one was reduced to such a wreck that, for a week at least, none of us would stir from our own homes.

When making out her list of guests, the Empress always tried—and very rightly too—to gather together in the same *série* those people whom she knew would get on well together. Consequently Madame de Pourtalès, Madame de Galliffet, Madame de Rothschild, several attractive Englishwomen, and myself, as also the men of our set, were always invited at the same time. Our *série*—rightly or wrongly—was called *la série élégante*.

One day Madame de Beyens very tactlessly said to a lady who had been invited to Compiègne, and who prided herself (without the slightest reason) on the elegance of her appearance, "Are you included in *la série élégante?*" "No," she answered snappishly, "I am not. I am included in the same *série* as yourself!"

XI

VISITS TO FONTAINEBLEAU

The visits to Fontainebleau differed but little from those to Compiègne, only they took place at a different season of the year. The stream of visitors was just as numerous, beginning towards the middle of June and lasting till the middle of July. The same ceremony was observed, the invitations were issued in precisely the same way, the arrival and departure were similar, there was the same immense quantity of luggage, similar intrigues to secure a place among the elect, and on the part of their Majesties the same careful selection of guests.

The castle of Fontainebleau is far more luxurious than that of Compiègne, and it is impossible to exaggerate either its exterior or interior beauty. Curiously enough, examples of all styles are to be found there, from the time of Francis I. down to that of Louis Philippe. The latter fortunately limited himself to refurnishing some quite unimportant rooms situated in the remotest part of the

castle. Our large apartment, furnished in the style of the Empire, looked out on to the private garden.

The meals were all served in the vast Galerie Henri II., which had been decorated by Primaticcio (an Italian sculptor of the sixteenth century). The sight of the beautifully decorated table in this magnificent room was positively dazzling, but the room itself could be approached only by a narrow passage, a drawback which nowadays would not be tolerated, but to which in times gone by they paid little or no heed. Luncheon was served at noon, just as at Compiègne, but we dined at eight o'clock instead of at seven. We generally spent the early part of the afternoon in the garden. Rowing on the lake was a source of great enjoyment to many of the guests, for every sort of boat was put at their disposal, from a canoe to a Venetian gondola, with a real Venetian gondolier ! I am bound to confess that many of the visitors came to grief in the canoes, but as they were all good swimmers, no harm was done, for even the most complete wetting is not of much account in hot weather. The Empress herself preferred the gondola to any other boat, and frequently spent an hour or so on the lake with a friend. "One can talk far more satisfactorily in a boat than anywhere else," she would often say. She loved the gentle move-

ment of the gondola as it glided through the quiet water of the lake.

Carriages were always ordered at four o'clock for a drive in the forest ; those who preferred riding had only to say so, and the riding-party always accompanied the carriages.

One day the Emperor, who had just received from England some splendid saddle-horses, said to me : "I wish you would try a mare I have just bought ; her action is perfect ; I am sure she would suit you." And turning to General Fleury he said, "Do order the new mare Kate for Princess Metternich ; that is to say, if she is in good condition."

"Well," said General Fleury, "she is in excellent condition, but she is rather high-spirited. However, Count Sandor's daughter will certainly know how to manage her!"

I protested, but in vain, saying I had not at all inherited my father's equestrian talent, but at four o'clock precisely Kate was brought round and we were introduced to each other. She certainly was a splendid creature, but not for one single second did she stand still while I mounted her. She was so restless that she frightened me from the very outset, but so many people were standing around watching me, and admiring her, that I had not the courage to admit how desperately nervous I was feeling. The groom let go the bridle and the mare reared. How I managed to stick on

I can't imagine, but I *did!* And from that moment I became the object of unlimited admiration. "What a picture!" "Isn't she delicious?" etc., etc. But oh, how thankfully would I have exchanged my proud position with any one of my admirers! Well, off we started. The Emperor was riding Solferias, his famous chestnut, and I was riding on his left, trembling in every limb. As we crossed the Great Court, the drums beat the salute, and Kate began to dance about in the most maddening way. The Emperor, who had no idea how terrified I was, paid me one compliment after another, but not one of them made the slightest impression upon me. As a matter of fact I hardly heard a word he said.

Outside the court the Emperor promptly set his horse at a gallop. I did the same, but the mare was getting so completely out of hand that at last he noticed it, and advising me to get away from the others as quickly as possible, he called out to Prince Leopold de Croy and asked him to accompany me. The Prince was in the service of Austria, and having obtained some weeks' leave, he had come to Paris, where he had received an invitation from their Majesties to spend a few days at Fontainebleau.

The moment we were alone I told the Prince that I had no intention of going any

farther, and that I was longing to dismount. The Prince, who was an excellent horseman, answered brusquely, "You surely do not mean to do anything of the sort—you—a daughter of Count Sandor!"

"It is no earthly use citing my father to me," I answered; "I am frightened to death of this mare, and I'm going to dismount, in spite of all the Sandors that ever existed."

I was just about to carry my threat into execution when the Prince appealed to my patriotism. "If you do anything so disgraceful," said he, "you will be disowned from one end of Austria to the other!"

I said I did not care a brass button what Austria or any other country might think of me, I was going to dismount, and there was the end of it. He begged, he entreated me not to do so, and finally ordered me to keep my seat in so peremptory a fashion that I realised I should have to give in—that I should have to drain the cup to the dregs, and with tears in my eyes I continued to gallop alongside my torturer. Oh, that ghastly ride through the forest of Fontainebleau! It was a nightmare, and I here declare that the happiest moment of my life, without any exception, was that in which I slipped off Kate's back, swearing to myself that never again should she have the honour of carrying me! The Emperor asked me how she had

behaved herself. I said, "I daresay Kate is a piece of perfection, but I can only say she terrified me out of my wits, and that is the simple truth."

The Prince de Croy glared furiously at me, but I was standing safely on my two feet, and much I cared what he thought of me!

His Majesty turned to him and said, laughing, "It seems that the Princess has not inherited her father's courage."

"But, Sire," I cried, "I wanted to dismount in the middle of the forest, and the Prince would not let me; he said I must live up to my father's reputation, and he even appealed to my patriotism!"

The Emperor smiled and said, "I think I must send an account of your conduct to the *Moniteur!*"

On another occasion his Majesty asked me to drive with him in his phaeton, and we went for a long expedition in the forest. As we drove along beneath the trees I could not help thinking that had anyone wished to make an attempt on the Emperor's life, he could hardly have chosen a better moment—he would most certainly have accomplished his object. There was no one to protect him but a woman and a little groom. And what could we have done?

The agents of the secret police were supposed to follow the Emperor wherever he went, but I remember quite well, that though

I looked carefully in every direction I saw no trace whatsoever of any human being.

The Emperor was driving that day a magnificent pair of horses. They were bays whose action was perfect ; they went like the wind. He drove remarkably well—quite as well as he rode.

It was during one of these drives that we came across a charming woman on horseback. The Emperor asked me whether I recognised her.

"Surely it is Marguérite Bellanger," I answered.

"Yes," he replied ; "she is not exactly beautiful but she is very graceful, and she certainly knows how to ride."

I heard afterwards that from that day forward Marguérite Bellanger made up her mind to make a conquest of the Emperor. She happened just then to be living at Fontainebleau, and wherever she thought he was likely to go, there she also went, with the object of attracting his attention. It is said that she even wrote to him, telling him that she had fallen deeply in love with him. The poor Emperor, who was extremely susceptible and who invariably succumbed to any fascinating woman who went out of her way to please him, fell an easy prey to her machinations ; with amazing credulity he persuaded himself that this woman really loved him for his own

sake, whereas she laughed at him quite openly, and without the slightest scruple described every detail of their liaison to her men friends, going even the length of showing them the letters which he was imprudent enough to write to her.

It was really astonishing that the Emperor, whose knowledge of women and life was equally great, should have allowed himself to be so completely taken in. But he was growing old, and the idea of having inspired a passion, not only touched but flattered him. And is not this sort of thing an every-day occurrence? Has the experience of others ever been of the slightest use to any one of us? On the contrary, each one looks upon his own case as the one exception to the rule.

One of the letters written by his Majesty to Marguérite Bellanger contained the following charming little sentence: "Je te dirai si bas que je t'aime, que personne ne l'entendra." The whole letter was read by someone I knew, and heaven alone knows by how many others!

We often went for long excursions on foot, to the profound despair of some of the ladies- and gentlemen-in-waiting, who hated walking, and who used to limp dejectedly behind the Empress, wiping the perspiration from their foreheads. She would keep us at it for hours! She was a capital walker herself, and the rougher the road the better it pleased her.

She would generally lead the way to the rockiest part of the forest, where climbing was a sheer necessity. At other times we were walked off to the Sables, from which the descent was downright painful. One was either buried up to one's knees in the sand, or one had to make up one's mind to sit down and let oneself slide from the top to the bottom of the rock. The Empress, and all we younger women, chose this last method, but the older members of the party simply could not resign themselves to such a proceeding, and the way the poor wretches floundered about in the sand was truly pitiable.

Now and again I drove Monsieur Mocquard's famous trotter, and as a rule we literally flew along the high-road. Monsieur Mocquard was the Emperor's secretary and used to import the most wonderful trotters from America. One day as we were trotting along at an unusually moderate pace—notwithstanding the fact that the horse was in splendid condition — a great char-à-banc, crowded with trippers, dashed past us and soon left us behind. The driver, seeing that the reins were in my hands, cried out: "This is something like trotting if you please!" Mocquard said to me: "Let them get well ahead of us, then we will send our horse along and we will soon have them in the rear." The char-à-banc was almost out of

sight when I handed over the reins to Monsieur Mocquard ; the next moment we were racing down the road at a really frightening pace. We caught up the char-à-banc in no time, and as we passed it, Mocquard, raising his hat, cried to the driver, "I beg your pardon, but *this* is even more like trotting !"

Mocquard was supposed by some people to be a bad man—I really do not know why. The Emperor liked him very much, and I believe he was sincerely attached to his Majesty. He was supremely clever, and the Emperor did nothing without consulting him. The speeches that were delivered from the throne were composed by his Majesty, but it was Mocquard, and Mocquard alone, who discussed them with him and to whose advice he always lent a willing ear. This exasperated the Ministers, to whom these speeches were never submitted until they were finished. All those I ever heard were written by a master hand.

I must say that personally Mocquard was sympathetic to me. He was so extraordinarily quick-witted, his conversation was so wonderfully interesting, and he himself was brimming over with life to such an unusual degree. A personality such as his is irresistible—it can hold anyone. His expression was one of amazing animation, and as to his eyes, I can compare them only to flames. I have never

seen eyes that shone more brilliantly—they flashed like lightning.

In the Empress's boudoir, on the ground floor (subsequently known as the Chinese room), there was a marvellous collection of *objets d'art.* These beautiful things had been presented to her Majesty by General Montauban, who, during the war with China, had taken them from the Summer Palace at Pekin. Later on the Emperor bestowed on him the title of Comte de Palekas.

Next door to the room containing this collection were two other rooms where we usually foregathered on days of excessive heat, and where we sat both during the daytime and in the evening. These drawing-rooms had been exquisitely furnished by the Empress and looked out on to the garden, which greatly added to their attractiveness. On rainy days we sat in the apartments on the first floor. In order to reach them it was necessary to cross the Galérie François I—a perfect marvel of wood-carving.

Sometimes we played games, and one day Monsieur Prosper Mérimée proposed that we should write the celebrated "Dictée de l'Académie," which offers the most unheard-of difficulties in the way of participles. Most of the party refused point-blank to have anything to do with it; they were afraid of exposing themselves to ridicule. The Emperor and

Empress, several of the guests, extremely serious and demure people who appeared to be quite sure of themselves, Alexander Dumas fils, Octave Feuillet, my husband and I sat round the great table, and armed with paper and pencils we began to write from Mérimée's dictation. When he had finished we handed him our different sheets of paper, which he began correcting and re-correcting for what appeared to us an eternity. We all began to feel very small indeed. After the last sheet had been corrected he announced in a loud voice, and to the stupefaction of everyone present, that the name of the most successful candidate was—Prince von Metternich! He then continued: "His Majesty the Emperor has made 45 mistakes, her Majesty 62, Princess Metternich 42, Alexander Dumas 24, Octave Feuillet 19—perhaps I had better pass over the rest—and Prince von Metternich 3."

The consternation of the two Academicians can easily be imagined. We really could not help laughing at their discomfiture. Alexander Dumas rose from his seat, and going up to my husband he said, "Prince, may I ask when you intend to present yourself at the Academy in order to teach us how to spell?"

It was the custom at Fontainebleau, as at Compiègne, for theatrical companies to come down from Paris every week. The beautiful

little theatre of the Palace had just been completely re-decorated, and was exceedingly dainty. It was hung with yellow damask, and the general effect was delightfully gay and attractive. That little theatre was a perfect jewel.

My husband and I generally spent a fortnight at Fontainebleau instead of the usual week, and in this way we often met two sets of guests. I am afraid that the preference accorded to us may have been the means of prejudicing many people against us, and once I respectfully ventured to hint as much to the Empress. Her only answer was, "What does it matter? Charbonnier est bien maître chez lui!" (N.B.—Even a coalheaver is master in his own house.)

XII

THE STATE BALLS—THE EMPRESS'S "MONDAYS"—FANCY AND MASKED BALLS—RIDOUTES AT THE AUSTRIAN EMBASSY

THERE were always two State balls during the Carnival—sometimes there were three. These took place in the Tuileries in the Salle des Maréchaux, so called because the walls were hung with the portraits of all the celebrated Marshals of the First Empire. It was a vast and lofty room. The orchestra was installed in an upper gallery. On a large daïs beneath were two seats reserved for the Emperor and Empress, and three others for Prince Napoleon, Princesse Clotilde, and Princesse Mathilde. The Ambassadresses sat on the broad step on the right-hand side, while the step on the left was reserved for members of the Emperor's family — the Murats, the Bonapartes, etc. The invitations were issued for nine o'clock, and the Diplomatic Corps always arrived on the stroke of the hour. They assembled in the Throne-room, where their Majesties held a reception before passing on to the ball-room. At about 9.15 the door opening into the Galerie de

Diane (the room preceding the Throne-room) was thrown open and an usher appeared in the doorway, who, in a loud voice, made the following announcement: "His Majesty, the Emperor!"

The Empress, on his Majesty's left hand, and standing a trifle behind him, would then curtsey three times, after which she always greeted the Ambassadresses, while the Emperor in the meantime addressed a few words to the Ambassadors. This reception having lasted about twenty minutes, the Emperor offered his arm to the Empress, and, passing through several drawing-rooms, and followed by the entire Diplomatic Corps, they made their way to the Salle des Maréchaux, where a solemn march was struck up the moment they appeared. They then ascended the great daïs, from which the Empress again curtsied three times to her assembled guests. The ball always opened with a waltz. At eleven o'clock the Court went in to supper, which was served at a buffet in the Galerie de Diane, and at midnight everyone retired, thankful to have done with this official drudgery. I need hardly say that the men were either in full uniform or in Court dress. In the latter case they wore knee-breeches, silk stockings and pumps, such as are worn at the Court of St. James. This dress certainly gives an air of great distinction to

an assembly, and I have always regretted that it was never introduced at the Austrian Court. There is really nothing more to say about these balls. The sight was an extremely fine one, but for sheer, unmitigated boredom they surpassed—in my opinion, at all events—anything that can possibly be imagined. The Ambassadresses were riveted to their seats. I was very young at that time, and positively hated sitting still, to say nothing of not being able to speak to anyone but my colleagues.

The Empress's "Mondays," as they were called, were very different. At these balls one danced to one's heart's content, and thoroughly enjoyed oneself. Every Monday we met at the Tuileries, and the ball took place in the blue saloon, just behind the Salle des Maréchaux. All the private apartments of the Empress were thrown open, with the exception of her beautiful little study. We were invited for 9.30, and after the arrival of the last guest their Majesties made their appearance.

It was the Empress's custom to greet the Ambassadresses before all the other guests. We always stood together close to the door by which she entered. But one evening she completely overlooked us and gave all her attention to some foreign ladies who had just arrived in France. She then passed on to a host of other people, leaving us still standing

by the door—never giving us another thought. I turned to Lady Cowley and to Baronne de Budberg and said, "If you don't object to standing here till the Empress has done talking to everyone else, well and good, but this is not the way to treat us in public, and I won't stand it ; I shall go and sit in the room next door. If the Empress wishes to speak to me, she can send for me, or she can come and see me." And off I went. Both ladies did their best to persuade me to stay, but nothing would induce me to do so.

About an hour later the Empress came in search of me, saying, "Why did you leave the reception-room ? What is the matter ? "

I answered : "Madame, of course I know that this is not an official fête, but in that case why did the Master of the Ceremonies place us all in our official position next to the door at which your Majesty enters the room, if it is not because the Empress is supposed to greet us before all the other women ? If I were only Princess Metternich I certainly would not have objected, but I am the Austrian Ambassadress, and think it is your Majesty's duty to take that fact into account."

The Empress, who was always kindness itself, then said to me : "You are right ; I made a great mistake. I cannot imagine what I was thinking about. Don't be angry any more."

I said : "Oh, Madame, it is I who ought to apologise, and I beg you to accept the only excuse that it is possible for me to make. I, personally, count for nothing ; it was my official position which I felt bound to uphold."

I had scarcely finished speaking when she affectionately held out her hand. "I'll never do such a thing again," she said, smiling kindly, in her own irresistible way.

It was at one of these balls that for the first time I saw the celebrated Contessa di Castiglione, that marvellous beauty who, according to general belief, had found the greatest favour in the eyes of Napoleon III, and who, with unprecedented insolence, never made her appearance until midnight, although it was clearly understood that every guest was expected to be at the Tuileries by 9.30.

I must frankly confess that when I saw her for the first time her beauty really took my breath away. She was wearing a white tulle dress, strewn with long-stemmed roses; she wore no ornament in her magnificent hair, which in front was dressed to resemble a tiara. She had the figure of a nymph; her neck, shoulders, arms, hands (she was not wearing her gloves, which she held in her hand), all seemed to be hewn out of rose-coloured marble of the most delicate shade. Though the bodice of her dress was cut

extremely low, it hardly looked indecent, to such a degree did this splendid creature resemble an antique statue. And her face was equal to her body; its shape a delicious oval; the complexion fresh and exquisite; dark green velvety eyes; eyebrows which no painter could have improved upon, and the most beautiful teeth it is possible to imagine. In a word, Venus herself come down from Olympus. Never have I seen anyone so beautiful; never again shall I see anyone so beautiful.

But perfection, alas, does not exist here below. To Contessa Castiglione had been denied that one great essential—charm. She was so entirely absorbed by her triumphal beauty that she had no thought beyond it. Not a movement, not an attitude but was carefully studied. Had she been simple and natural she really would have turned the world upside down, at all events she would have had it at her feet. But one gazed at her, raved about her beauty, only to come away sickened by her vanity, by her eternal posing. I believe the Emperor was the only person whose admiration was so great that he saw in her no flaw.

Madame de Castiglione had no use whatsoever for the members of her own sex; only to men did she care to talk. Personally, I never knew her, as she never even asked to be presented to me.

It was at one of these balls that she was asked whether she never danced.

"Dance!" she replied. "Why should I dance? In order to get as red in the face, and to make as great a fright of myself as all the other women here? No, indeed!"

This remark was repeated, as it was bound to be, and it must be owned that it was hardly of a nature calculated to prejudice "the other women" in her favour.

One night—it was at a ball at St. Cloud—she appeared with her hair powdered on one side only; on the other it was simply dressed *en bandeaux*. On the powdered side of her head she wore an enormous bunch of sky-blue ostrich feathers. And this extraordinary coiffure actually suited her! I did not happen to be at that ball, but I was told that she had never looked more beautiful. On the following evening she went to another ball in Paris, wearing the simplest of muslin dresses, no jewels whatsoever. People who had seen her in the extraordinarily fantastic costume of the night before assured me that she looked even lovelier in this studied and exaggerated simplicity.

During my time there were a great many beautiful women at Court, and among them I must certainly mention the Comtesse de Mercy-Argenteau (*née* de Caraman-Chimay), a tall, superb woman with the bearing of a

queen; my friend Madame de Pourtalès (*née* de Bussierre), ideally lovely, graceful and refined; Madame de Galliffet (*née* Lafitte), with her auburn hair, her strange and beautiful eyes—one green and one chestnut brown—of whose lovely teeth it might almost be said that they illuminated her whole face; Madame Leopold Lehon (*née* Genzano), graceful and charming; those two very distinguished-looking women, Madame Walewska (*née* Ricci) and the Marquise de Cadore (*née* de Bonneval), and others equally distinguished-looking, such as Maréchale Canrobert, Madame de Bourgoing (*née* Dolfus), her friend, the little Marquise de Las Maresemes, Maréchale Malakoff (*née* Sophie Valiera de la Paniega), a cousin of the Empress, and finally the Duchesse d'Albe, her Majesty's sister, who, it is true, visited Paris but seldom, Madame Alphonse de Rothschild, and a great many others.

When these "Mondays" were first instituted the Empress would often dance a waltz or two, but after her sister's death she gave up dancing altogether.

Many delightful fancy balls were given at the Tuileries. Several men objected so strongly to fancy dress that an exception was made in their favour, and they were asked to wear only a Venetian cloak over their Court dress, each man being at perfect liberty to

choose the colour of his own cloak. My husband wore either a crimson or mauve cloak, made of moiré silk, the former being edged with black velvet. The diplomatists and all the other big-wigs were among those who refused point-blank to wear anything else in the way of fancy dress. The Emperor himself wore a Venetian cloak like everyone else, and unless uniform was worn, Court dress was insisted upon.

I once wore a very effective costume; I was supposed to be a demon—a black demon! This costume was embroidered in silver, and strewn with diamonds, and I was provided with two little diamond horns which were made for me by Baptist. Another time I wore a Louis XV costume; it was yellow, trimmed with pompon roses, which were attached to the dress with silver tassels. The hat I wore was made of yellow crape, ornamented with yellow ostrich feathers. Worth was responsible for both costumes, and he had copied the latter from a portrait of the period.

The Empress once appeared as the wife of a Doge. She looked marvellously beautiful in this costume; the little head-dress, somewhat similar to a Phrygian cap, suited her to perfection. I could hardly take my eyes off her.

It was at one of these balls that Madame de

Castiglione made her appearance as Salambo. She wore a replica of the costume described by Gustave Flaubert in his celebrated novel of that name, which just then was making a very great sensation. Our amazement can be imagined on discovering that her feet were bare !—or if they were not bare, that she was wearing tights of so fine a texture that the effect was precisely the same. But even more surprising was the black velvet tunic she wore. It was split on both sides up to the waist, and she could hardly move without showing the full length of her—apparently—bare legs. Nevertheless, I am bound in justice to say that, in spite of our indignation, her beauty was of so statuesque a nature—it was so perfect—that there was nothing actually indecent in it. She looked like a statue come to life. Her magnificent hair hung down her back and fell to her knees ; her arms, covered with bracelets representing golden serpents, were entirely bare, and her toes were covered with rings. So extraordinary an apparition has seldom been seen ! It was strange, fantastic, perturbing beyond belief ; it was absolutely startling. But the beauty of the woman was equally beyond belief.

Although these balls were so interesting and enjoyable, combining the greatest luxury with the greatest elegance, their Majesties preferred the fancy balls that took place at

the various Ministries and Embassies, where masks were permitted. Before, however, describing any of these, I must make mention of the great ball given by the Empress at the Palais d'Albe, an exquisite house belonging to her in the Champs-Elysées to which a garden was attached. It was situated in the locality of the Rue Pierre Charon, and it was there that the Countess of Montijo and the Duchesse d'Albe always stayed when they visited Paris. The Empress had a beautiful ball-room built out into the garden, and it was there she gave this really lovely fête. Their Majesties wore dominos on this occasion. I took part in the quadrille representing the Four Elements, and was one of the group representing Air. There were four women to every group. Those representing Land wore nothing but emeralds and diamonds; those representing Fire, nothing but rubies and diamonds; those representing Water nothing but pearls and diamonds, and those representing Air nothing but turquoises and diamonds. We all lent one another jewels. Not possessing any turquoises of my own, I wore those belonging to Princess Lise Troubetzkoi; they were very beautiful, and the quadrille was an immense success.

The most gorgeous fancy balls of all were those given at the Foreign Office by Count Walewska; at the Admiralty by the Marquis

de Chasseloup-Laubat, and at the "Présidence du Corps Législatif" by the Duc de Morny. Others were given by General Fleury, Master of the Horse, by Monsieur Rouher, Minister of the Emperor's Household, and finally by Richard and myself at the Austrian Embassy. A few others were given by the Duc de Bisaccia (the present Duc de Doudeauville), the Comte de Montgomery, and the Prince de Sagan.

Their Majesties frequented only the balls given at the various Ministries, though they once did us the honour of attending one given by us. At the Admiralty, in the course of one of these fancy balls, the Four Quarters of the Globe were represented. The effect, as these groups entered the room, was magnificent, and never in my life have I seen a more superb display of costumes, worn by a more beautiful collection of women. The hostess, Madame de Chasseloup-Laubat, an excessively pretty woman, was dressed in Oriental robes, and represented Asia. She was carried into the room in a palanquin adorned with enormous peacock's feathers, and her numerous attendants were also superbly dressed. Madame Bartholoni represented an African queen. She made her entrance in a golden chariot covered with flowers, and she also scored a veritable triumph that evening. Two thousand invitations had been issued, and the variety of the

costumes worn that night was something astounding.

I wore a domino, and from midnight till six in the morning impersonated Madame de Persigny, who had a very peculiar lisp. I managed to imitate this lisp so well, that all the men who laughed and talked with me that evening were fully persuaded that it really was she to whom they were talking! When I was on the point of leaving the house, Monsieur de la Redorte said he would order my carriage, adding, "Madame la Duchesse, it really is time for you to unmask, for, to be frank, we all recognised you from the very outset." I protested, assuring them that they were quite mistaken about my identity, but they laughed in my face; Monsieur de la Redorte then said: "You see, Madame, you have not been able to get rid of your delicious little lisp!" I answered: "But I *don't* lisp, and if you really know me so well, tell me who I am." They laughed still more heartily, and standing in a row before me they said: "La Du-ches-se de Per-si-gny!" Whereupon I immediately removed my mask! They were absolutely taken aback, quite stupefied—they had been so absolutely certain of themselves. Every one of them would far rather have been cut to pieces than admit himself capable of making such a mistake!

The balls given at the "Présidence du Corps

Législatif" were also very brilliant. The young Duchesse de Morny (*née* Princess Troubetzkoi) was in the very bloom of her youth, a beautiful, fair-haired woman only twenty-five years old. Although perhaps a trifle too slight, she looked extremely distinguished. At one of these balls she appeared as "The Morning Star." Clad in a white tunic, strewn with silver discs, with a large diamond star in her hair, her costume might have passed for nothing more than a rather unusual ball-dress.

But the sensation of the evening was undoubtedly the entrance of the lovely Madame Ernest Feydeau, wife of the celebrated novelist. Her dress was copied from a portrait of Louis XIV as a boy. It was made of white satin heavily embroidered in gold. With this she wore a large white hat ornamented with feathers, and even to this day she lives in my memory as a vision of surpassing loveliness. Owing to the fact that at the time of the Grand Monarque a boy's dress consisted of a short pleated skirt that fell to the knees, and of a little cape attached to the shoulders, there was nothing, absolutely nothing, in her appearance to offend anyone possessed of even the keenest sense of propriety. Personally I have never seen any human being more fascinating, more altogether delicious, and the palm was unanimously awarded to her.

Instead of the traditional black domino, the

Emperor had chosen a Bedouin costume—white bournous, white woollen turban, etc. He was masked into the bargain. But it was easy to know him by his walk ; though of course never for a moment did one let him suspect that he had been recognised. In his belt he carried a dagger richly ornamented with—imitation jewels !

Coming up to where I stood, he asked me if I were not afraid of having anything to do with a man armed to the teeth. I said that the very sight of him struck terror to my soul, and that the only way to convince me that he harboured no evil intentions toward me was to hand me over his beautiful dagger.

" And what would you do with it ? "

" I would have the stones removed, and would have them re-set as rings, bracelets, necklaces."

" Do you know that every stone is worth a million ? "

" Ah, no ! " I cried, " a poor Bedouin like yourself would have sold them long ago had each stone been worth a million. Go home now, but send me that dagger first thing to-morrow morning. I won't have the jewels removed—I will keep it, such as it is, in remembrance of you, and it shall be put away in a museum belonging to my husband at a place called Königswart in Bohemia ! "

Next morning I was handed a parcel con-

taining the dagger, and on a piece of paper in the Emperor's handwriting I read these words : " From the poor Bedouin."

Monsieur de Lutteroth happened to be at this same ball. He was a dreadful fop and was—very rightly—disliked by everyone who knew him. He came attired as " A Son of the Night ! " The man who wore this costume was a fool, but the costume itself was magnificent. It consisted of voluminous sapphire-blue breeches, embroidered in silver and veiled with tulle of the same shade. The sapphire-blue jacket was also veiled with tulle and strewn with diamonds, and it was fastened with a superb crescent made of diamonds. People stood in rows to see him pass by, and, incredible as it may seem, though they looked upon him as an object of ridicule—and made no secret of it—he thought they were not only admiring, but envying him into the bargain !

We always gave a *ridoute* at the Embassy on Thursday in Mid-Lent. These parties had an enormous success. Invitations were eagerly sought after, and those sent out almost always amounted to between 1500 and 2000. An orchestra placed in the great ball-room played waltzes and other dances, and the women wore dominos and carried on every sort of intrigue. At the far end of the room was a buffet with refreshments—no supper, as it was Lent. These dances often went on till three and four in

the morning, so thoroughly did people enjoy them.

Ridoutes à la Viennoise never took place anywhere except at the Austrian Embassy. After we left Paris they were never given again, but to this day, those who were present during our time never mention them without enthusiasm. There was a perfect flow of wit from the beginning to the end of these evenings, which were characterised by the greatest animation and gaiety. I would often halt with other friends before a group of three or four people to listen to the remarks exchanged between them, and I can only say that the brilliancy and humour of some of these conversations made us laugh till we were on the verge of total collapse.

Many of the women changed their dominos two or three times during the evening, and this gave rise to many amusing incidents. I had arranged a series of dressing-rooms on the first floor, so as to enable them to change at their leisure. Their dominos were brought during the day by their various maids, who returned in the evening to assist their mistresses in putting them on and taking them off.

I will wind up this chapter with an account of a grand ball given by us at the Embassy in 1867 at the time of the Exhibition. The Austrian Government had opened a credit of a hundred thousand francs, and sixty-five thousand francs were spent upon this fête,

which I venture to say surpassed all those given by any of the other Embassies. I asked Monsieur Alphaud—Chief Director of Works in Paris, and *the* organiser *par excellence*—to help me to arrange everything, and he very kindly consented to do so. An immense ball-room was constructed looking on to the garden. It was exquisitely decorated in white and gold. The hangings were rose-coloured and green, and were made of satin. The chandeliers represented gigantic baskets of flowers ; the brackets also were in the shapes of baskets, and candles innumerable rose out of the flowers with which they were fitted. Some of the candelabras consisted entirely of rose-coloured geraniums, others of crimson geraniums, while the chandelier in the centre of the room was composed of geraniums of every colour. Beautiful plants filled all the corners of the room, and through enormous sheets of plate-glass the brilliantly illuminated garden was visible. The trees were also hung with electric bulbs of every hue. From every window and from every sheet of plate-glass a different view was obtained. One window looked upon flower-beds laid out with exquisite taste, another upon a statue emerging from a circle of lovely flowers, another on to an avenue of orange trees in full bloom, another on to a bower surrounded by immense palm trees and gigantic ferns, provided with chairs

and couches covered with the most beautiful embroideries. But the undisputed success of the evening was the arrangement at the far end of the ball-room. Behind one of these immense sheets of plate-glass a rockery had been constructed. The loveliest roses grew in profusion in every crevice. A cascade shimmering with all the colours of the rainbow fell from the rocks upon this glimpse of fairyland, and so wonderfully had the scheme been carried out that not a drop fell upon the roses or upon the other plants half hidden by the iridescent waters.

Alphaud really surpassed himself on this occasion, and everyone, including their Majesties, and all the foreign Royalties present, were loud in praising this really lovely sight.

Supper was laid for their Majesties and the foreign Royalties in the apartments on the first floor. All the other guests supped inside an immense red-and-white tent in the garden. I had had eight large chestnut trees introduced into this tent, and the tables were built round them. The trunk of each tree was wreathed in flowers and gave the impression of an enormous centre-piece. The flowers for this ball had been provided by the greenhouses of the city of Paris—it would have been quite impossible for any single florist to accomplish so great a number of elaborate decorations.

Baron Haussmann offered to lend us the

flowers, provided we paid for their transport, and were willing to hold ourselves responsible for any damage to them. Not a single flower was damaged, but the transport and the fees due to the vast regiment of gardeners who brought them, amounted, as far as I can remember, to three or four thousand francs.

Johann Strauss, who was in Paris at that time, and who was giving a series of concerts, asked if he might be allowed to bring his orchestra to the Embassy on the occasion of this ball. How delighted we were to accept his offer can easily be imagined. He carried everyone away by the splendid animation, the unbounded enthusiasm with which he conducted the waltzes played by his superb orchestra. But he took the quadrilles very slowly—so slowly that we were constantly obliged to ask him to hasten the tempo.

The Crown Prince and Princess of Prussia happened to be the Emperor's guests at this moment, and they also were present at this ball. The Crown Prince, greeting me on his entrance, assured me that it was a source of great satisfaction to him to think that his first appearance in Paris was taking place at the Austrian Embassy. It was just a year ago that his father, King William, had declared war against the Emperor of Austria ! It may have been a source of great satisfaction to him, but I cannot say the same for myself.

XIII

VERSAILLES.—FÊTE GIVEN IN HONOUR OF THE KING OF SPAIN—DON FRANCISCO DE ASSISI

In the month of June 1866 Don Francisco de Assisi, husband of Queen Isabella of Spain, came over to Paris to pay a visit to the Emperor and Empress of the French. Their Majesties decided to give a great fête in his honour. Versailles was to be the scene of the festivities, and the Empress herself undertook to organise the whole affair from beginning to end.

One evening, at one of the small dances that took place every Monday at the Tuileries, her Majesty told me, in the course of conversation, that she was thinking of going down to Versailles to look into this matter, and she asked me whether I would care to accompany her. I need hardly say that I accepted her invitation without a moment's hesitation, and a few days later we drove thither together, accompanied by General Rollin, Comptroller of the Household, and Count Bacciocchi, Comptroller of the Imperial Theatres. These gentlemen were to take down her Majesty's orders with regard to the forthcoming arrangements, which included, among others, the

performance of a play in the wonderfully beautiful theatre belonging to the Palace.

The Empress's first care was to make a thorough inspection of the interior of the Palace with a view to planning out the exact details connected with the arrival of her guests at the theatre. They were all to be in their places before the arrival of the sovereigns, and the curtain was to be rung up immediately after the entrance of their Majesties ; flowers were to be placed *en masse* to the right and left of the stage, and two *cent-gardes* were to be stationed at the pillars on either side ; each box was examined from floor to ceiling and a careful calculation was made of the number of chairs and carpets that it would be necessary to send down from Paris ; the chairs were to be gilt, upholstered in red velvet. When all these decisions had been come to we made our way down the long gallery that led into the splendid apartments overlooking the park. A red carpet was to be laid down in this gallery, *cent-gardes* were to line the way, and the window recesses were to be filled with a profusion of flowering plants.

On arriving at the Galerie des Glaces—that marvel of Versailles—the Empress realised at a glance that the arrangements for lighting the room were altogether inadequate, and an immediate order was given for more chandeliers and more candelabras.

"This is where we will have supper after the play," she said to General Rollin; then, turning to the architect, she asked him how many people it would be possible to seat comfortably.

"From four to five hundred," he answered.

"Very good," said the Empress; "then we will have forty or fifty small tables arranged about the room. And now, as far as I can see, everything will be perfectly satisfactory."

General Rollin said everything would be perfectly satisfactory if her Majesty would be content with a cold supper. "A hot supper," said he, "is out of the question." He then explained that the kitchens being so far removed from the Galerie des Glaces, it would be quite impossible to serve up hot dishes with any success.

"But how did they manage in the time of Louis XIV," cried the Empress, "when hot suppers were always served in the Galerie des Glaces?"

"Madame," answered the architect, "I have here with me all the known facts in connection with this question, and will submit them to your Majesty. The dishes were all brought in on immense trays mounted on wheels; beneath these trays were receptacles in which charcoal fires were kept burning, and they were wheeled in from the kitchen across one drawing-room after the other.

There were no pantries or sculleries, as your Majesty can see. Long tables were placed in the salon preceding the Galerie des Glaces, and in this salon they actually did all the washing-up, and the King was obliged to walk across this improvised scullery every time he returned from the theatre."

Of course the Empress realised that such an arrangement was quite impossible, and, willy nilly, she resigned herself to the idea of a cold supper, which in her opinion lacked the distinction of a hot one. But the vexed question of a pantry and scullery had yet to be solved. After a moment's reflection General Rollin thought he could get over this difficulty by waiting till the guests had actually taken their seats at table in the Galerie des Glaces, after which all the necessary things for washing-up, etc., could be brought in from the kitchen. Such an arrangement would hide from view all the objectionable—though necessary—paraphernalia past which the Grand Monarch and his Court had been obliged to file in days gone by.

Her Majesty agreed that this was the best way of solving the problem, and then went out on to the terrace, where Ruggieri, the pyrotechnician, and a host of workmen were waiting for her.

It was on this occasion that the Empress ordered those wonderful fireworks, those

superb illuminations, which for sheer beauty surpassed anything I have ever seen during the whole course of my existence. Had the greatest expert been asked to improve upon them, he would have been obliged to admit that it was entirely beyond his power.

Ruggieri proposed that the fireworks should be let off beside the sheet of water at the extreme end of the park ; the first rockets to be sent up producing those superb clusters of 25,000 brilliant stars, which he thought—and rightly thought—would inaugurate the festivities with incomparable splendour. Rows of fairy lights were to be laid on everywhere ; every flower-bed was to be surrounded with them, and all the fountains were to be illuminated with arc lamps, while electric search-lights were to be installed on the roof of the Palace in order to project their rays on to the entire flower-garden beneath. All the trees in the park were to be illuminated with red and orange bulbs, which would convey the impression that they were bearing luminous fruit, and a million and a half of these bulbs were to be employed.

It rather took one's breath away to hear the casual way in which Ruggieri referred to "a million and a half bulbs" as anyone else would have referred to twenty. "How delightful it must be," I thought to myself, "to give such orders as these, without having to consider

the cost of anything!" Even now the remembrance of those few hours spent at Versailles makes my mouth water, though every time I think of that fête, it is to regret that no matter how long I may live, I shall never have the chance of organising anything approaching it.

The great day dawned at last. Wonderfully dressed, and wearing all our diamonds, we drove to Versailles, and by nine o'clock, the loveliest women and the most distinguished men in France were gathered together in that most beautiful of theatres. It was really an exquisite sight, and the guests, one and all, were worthy of their surroundings.

At 9.15 their Majesties made their appearance with the wretched little King of Spain, who was, without exception, the most insignificant creature imaginable ; physically, he was utterly unworthy of the magnificent fête arranged in his honour, and as far as I was able to make out he was unworthy of it in every other respect as well.

The piece chosen for performance was taken from the repertory of the time of Louis XIV. It was very dull, but the costumes required for its production were magnificent and, what is more, they were in perfect taste ; they had all been copied from portraits and engravings of the period. Fortunately this play did not last for more than an hour.

The effect on entering the Galerie des Glaces was dazzling. The beautiful room was splendidly illuminated, and the view from the immense windows overlooking the garden, which was shimmering and scintillating with thousands of lights, was fantastically enchanting. Everyone was enthusiastic, and even the King of Spain remarked that surely *un petit extra* must have been contrived in his honour.

After supper the Empress, taking the arm of her royal guest, stepped out on to the terrace with him. This was the signal for Ruggieri to send up his wonderful rockets, each one succeeding the other with such rapidity that the very heavens seemed on fire. One hardly knew which way to look ; it was like a scene in fairyland. But all of a sudden there was a terrific cannonade, and amid an uproar that was nothing short of deafening, suns and stars innumerable shot up in every direction, while, to all appearance, the whole of Versailles was wrapped in flames. The public had been admitted to the park, which was thronged, and the enthusiasm that greeted this magnificent, this incomparable spectacle, was beyond imagination.

The Empress looked very beautiful that night. She wore a white gown strewn with silver and was blazing with diamonds. As she moved slowly through the crowd, accom-

panied by the gentlemen of the household, she received a superb ovation. Even now can I see her as she wandered in and out among the flower-beds close to the Palace, a white bournous embroidered with gold thrown carelessly over her shoulders ; even now can I hear the ceaseless murmur of admiration that followed in her wake. She could not bear to be complimented on her appearance or on the beauty of her gowns, but she expected—and with every reason—to be congratulated on the success of the fête she had organised at Versailles. As she passed me, she summoned me to her side with that familiar "Eh ?" which was continually on her lips and which she pronounced with a grace that was typically Southern.

"Eh, what do you think of my fête ?"

"I think it is entirely worthy of your Majesty !"

"Now tell me, did you think it would be as successful as this ?"

"Madame," I answered, "I thought we might be permitted to expect something passable when I heard your Majesty agree to Ruggieri's suggestion of a hundred thousand rockets and electric bulbs to the number of a million and a half !"

On leaving France the King of Spain presented her Majesty with a superb jewel. It was an emerald cut into the shape of a cross.

The Empress wore it constantly, but eventually she sold it in England in 1870.

On my return to Austria I was present at some fireworks given at Schönbrunn in honour of the Emperor of Russia. Prince Constantin of Hohenlohe, who at that time was Grand Master of our Emperor's Household, asked me whether I did not greatly admire the pyrotechnical display that he had organised.

"The effect of those rockets behind the summer-house is very good—very good indeed!" said he. "It is a beautiful sight, but, good heavens, so it ought to be. Do you know that they are sending up quite a thousand, and that we have spent on them at the very least, eight or ten thousand florins. However, we have every reason to be satisfied with the result; don't you agree with me?"

"Well," I answered, "it isn't bad, but as I am still able to recollect the fireworks at Versailles, where I saw a *hundred thousand* rockets rise into the air, at a cost of six hundred thousand francs, you can imagine that I find it rather difficult to wax enthusiastic over the usual fireworks and illuminations."

He died shortly afterwards. I believe my answer killed him.

XIV

THE EMPEROR OF AUSTRIA IN FRANCE

(*Paris, October* 1867.)

On the 23rd of October, 1867, towards three o'clock in the afternoon, a number of men in full uniform were hurrying on to the platform of the Gare de l'Est. The boulevards were crowded with people; State carriages were drawn up in the Place de la Gare, and all the streets, from the Place Sébastopol to the Elysée, were lined with troops on either side; all the houses were hung with flags and emblems; Paris was *en fête*.

The Emperor Franz Josef was expected to arrive at any minute. He had been expected once before, in the month of June, but owing to the death of his brother, the Emperor of Mexico, who had been shot by order of Juarez at Queretaro in that same month, while the Exhibition was in full swing, his visit was postponed till October, when the period of public mourning would have elapsed.

While all this turmoil was going on inside and outside the station, the drums suddenly

beat the salute, the sound of trumpets was heard, and the Emperor Napoleon entered the station at ten minutes to three. His Majesty came to us, and holding out his hand he said: "I am very happy at the prospect of seeing the Emperor, of receiving him in France—very happy—very happy indeed." He dwelt upon these words with emphasis, and a smile lit up his countenance. He really *did* look happy. I have seldom seen on his face so radiant an expression of satisfaction.

After a few minutes the Emperor was informed that the Imperial train was just about to enter the station. Every one stood at attention. There was a profound silence; all eyes were fixed in one direction, and presently we caught sight of the train. It was moving very slowly, and finally drew up before the red velvet carpet that had been laid down from the Imperial carriage to the bottom of the steps in the Place Sébastopol. The moment the train came to a standstill the Emperor Franz Josef stepped out of his carriage, extending both his hands to the Emperor Napoleon, who drew the visitor into his arms.

The cheers that burst forth at that moment were deafening, there were no bounds to the general enthusiasm; one almost expected the station to collapse. Our Emperor made his

way to where we were standing, and shook hands with us. He was followed by his brothers, the Archdukes Karl Ludwig and Ludwig Victor, who were accompanying him on this triumphal journey.

The usual presentations having been made, the Emperor Napoleon invited his royal guest to accompany him down to the carriages, which were all drawn up in front of the station, whence there was a full view of the great square and the long line of the boulevard. Never shall I forget the sight that greeted our eyes at that moment. The square was swarming with people; every window of every house was filled to overflowing with spectators, and along the boulevard people hung upon the trees like branches of human grapes.

The Emperor stood slightly in the rear of his royal guest, endeavouring to efface himself as much as possible, and the only person distinctly visible was our beloved Emperor, upon whose slight and graceful figure the sun shone radiantly as he stood between the columns. The crowd acclaimed him with such an outburst of enthusiasm that, accustomed as he was to ovations of every sort, he nevertheless seemed almost overwhelmed by this reception. He stood quite still for a few moments, thanking the crowd for their wonderful welcome, then turning to the Emperor

Napoleon he asked him whether they had not better start at once. The two sovereigns went down the stairs together to the repeated cries of "Vive l'Empereur!" They then entered the splendid State carriage that was awaiting them; and followed by all the other carriages, they drove straight to the Elysée, which was to be the residence of our Emperor during his stay in Paris.

Here the Empress, surrounded by the Prince Imperial and her entire Court, was waiting to receive his Majesty. As they drew up before the entrance our Emperor stepped quickly out of the carriage, rapidly ascended the flight of steps, and bowing low before the Empress, he kissed her hand. She curtsied to the ground with the wonderful grace that never deserted her, and our carriage having followed close upon the Imperial carriages, I had the good fortune to witness their first meeting. It seemed to me that he was most favourably impressed. And how could it have been otherwise? The woman was unique; beautiful, attractive, really *grande dame*, and kind and cordial as well!

Her Majesty was attired in a pale blue satin dress, trimmed with wonderful Alençon lace. Around her neck she wore her splendid pearls, at her waist a bunch of Parma violets, and on her head a little pale blue capote, also trimmed with Parma violets, to which

diamonds were attached resembling drops of dew. After the first compliments had been exchanged the Austrian Emperor offered his arm to the French Empress, and I saw them talking together in a way that augured well indeed for the future.

A very important personage who was travelling with our Emperor told me that the Emperor Napoleon had feared lest there might be an attempt to assassinate him on his way from the station to the Elysée. As to "*fear*" on the Emperor's part, the idea is not worth a moment's consideration. In the first place the police service, as organised by Pietri, was admirable ; in the next place, the Imperial guest received in France that day enjoyed the very greatest popularity ; and lastly, the Emperor Napoleon was absolutely fearless—he did not know the meaning of the word fear where he himself was concerned. He was a fatalist of the most pronounced type, and was often heard to say, that those who were doomed to die by the hand of an assassin could never escape their fate, no matter what precautions were taken on their behalf.

There was a small dinner that night at the Elysée to celebrate the arrival of the Emperor Franz Josef. The Archdukes, my husband, and the suites of both Emperors were the only guests invited.

We also wished to give a dinner at the Embassy in honour of our beloved Emperor, and his Majesty having authorised us to invite him, we in our turn asked several Marshals of France, and some of the most distinguished Generals in the French army to meet him, also many other military men of importance. We were to dine at seven o'clock. At five minutes to seven his Majesty made his appearance, and as all the above-mentioned military men had already been introduced to him by the Emperor Napoleon, our own Emperor at once entered into conversation with Marshals Canrobert, Randon, and Lebœuf, and then addressed a few words to all the others in turn. After this little reception was over, our *maître d'hôtel*, Dubosy, who prided himself on the perfection of his manners, announced in a stentorian voice, "Sa Majesté est servie."

Our Emperor at once offered me his arm and we went in to dinner. I must beg leave to boast that the room looked quite beautiful, and even his Majesty made some flattering remarks on its appearance. Our chef, who had been in the service of Baron James de Rothschild, and who was the best cook it has ever been my good fortune to come across, really surpassed himself that day. I still remember that his Majesty asked to be served twice from a dish called "Truffes à

la Lucullus," and from another whose name I have forgotten.

In the course of this dinner I asked our Emperor whether we might be allowed to have his portrait painted for the reception-room of the Embassy. He appeared to be somewhat surprised at my request, but the next moment he very graciously acceded to it.

After dinner a very important personage who had heard me make this request came up to me and said, "You really are astonishing. Your courage is past belief. You *do* indulge in plain speaking."

"To what in the world are you alluding?" I asked.

"Well, didn't you ask his Majesty to allow you to have his portrait painted? Don't you know that it is absolutely forbidden to ask a favour of his Majesty except at an official audience? And even then it is etiquette to acquaint him beforehand with the nature of the request."

"Well," said I, rather brusquely, "we don't hesitate to ask God Almighty for anything we want at any moment of the day or night, and neither He, nor anyone else, seems to think that there is anything out of the way in such a proceeding, although, goodness knows, the favours we ask of Him are very different from the one I asked of his Majesty

just now—an official portrait for the Embassy. I don't suppose the Emperor is more particular than the Author of his own being, and he will certainly forgive any indiscretion, if he has not long ago done so."

Our Emperor was more than kind and genial during the whole of that evening. After coffee had been served I offered him a cigar on a little salver. He took it and thanked me; then, looking round the room, he said, "But do none of these gentlemen smoke?" As a matter of fact no one had ventured to do so. On realising this he begged me to fetch him a box of cigars, after which he went round, offering them himself to all my guests, saying at the same time: "If none of you gentlemen care to smoke, neither will I."

Naturally, every man present took a cigar, and presently his Majesty and several of the Generals entered into a very animated conversation. They were all very much impressed by our Emperor's kindness and absolute simplicity, and every man who met him that evening took a real liking to him.

There was a great review at Longchamps the morning after this dinner. Our Emperor was again acclaimed with indescribable enthusiasm, not only on his way to and fro, but also on the ground itself. The Prince de la Moscowa, himself so attractive and agree-

able, told me that the people in the street literally besieged his carriage so as to get a glimpse of him, and that several workmen tried to climb on to the steps in order to shake hands with him. The escort surrounding the carriage found it impossible to keep the crowd off—they literally threw themselves in front of the smiling Emperor; but it was an anxious time for the aides-de-camp, who dreaded the possibility of an assassin being among them.

But I must return to the evening of our dinner-party, which wound up at the Opera, where we were given *Don Carlos* of Verdi. It was a very tiresome performance, about as bad a choice as could possibly have been made. It is a very curious thing, but I have remarked that no matter in what town or in what country a gala performance is given, it is sure to be a failure from an artistic point of view. Those who are responsible for the operas or plays performed never seem to succeed. It is one of the most curious, though one of the most usual occurrences in the annals of the theatre that the pieces chosen on these occasions are invariably dull and uninteresting.

But one thing was thoroughly appreciated by the public, and that was the fact that our Emperor made no attempts to visit any of the *petits théâtres*. The Emperor Alexander of Russia, who had visited Paris in the preceding

June, had ordered a box for *La belle Hélène* even before his departure from St. Petersburg, and had been severely criticised for what was considered—and very rightly, too—as a distinct breach of propriety, for at that time operettas in the style of *La belle Hélène*, were looked upon as extremely improper, not to say licentious, and those who went to plays of that sort took good care to conceal the fact from their friends.

And now may I be permitted a slight digression?

We ourselves went with several friends to the first night of this operetta. It was a tremendous success, and Hortense Schneider Kopp, Grenier, and Conclerc were incomparable in it. At one moment the last named completely forgot the words of his song, "Roi barbu qui s'avance;" he stopped dead, then went up to the prompter's box and asked him to tell him how they began. After that he apologised to the public, with whom he was a very great favourite, saying, "I can't imagine what possessed me, but had you all threatened to blow my brains out I could not have told you that the bearded king in question was Agamemnon. But now I shall be able to go on." From that moment everything went smoothly.

On our way home from the Variétés my husband said to me, "We made a great

mistake in going to this first night of *La belle Hélène* ; our names will be in all the papers to-morrow, and it is all wrong for any woman to have gone—almost officially—to such a play as that."

Times have changed since then. It is my belief that were *Labelle Hélène* to be given at a ladies' school to-day, no one would turn a hair.

But to go back to my subject.

Our Emperor was kind enough to pay me a visit ; we talked together for about a quarter of an hour, and his Majesty's impressions of men and things in Paris formed the staple of our conversation. The Emperor Napoleon, who had met our Emperor in very trying circumstances in Italy (in 1859), was extremely anxious to wipe out all painful memories by his cordial and affectionate attitude. He was so absolutely natural, so fundamentally kind that his Majesty could not help liking him. As to the Empress Eugénie, he fell a victim at first sight to her charm and grace, and they struck up a friendship that proved to be lifelong and that nothing was able to destroy.

Our Emperor spoke a good deal about the little Prince Imperial. He thought him a dear little fellow ; his likeness to both father and mother had struck him—the blue, sincere eyes of the father, the splendid eyebrows of the

mother ; the expression and manners of the father, the mother's way of carrying himself. Poor child ! Who then could have imagined the horrible destiny in store for him ?

Neither Prince Napoleon nor Princesse Clotilde was in Paris at that time, so there were no difficulties in that quarter. Even a simple exchange of visits between our Emperor and Prince Napoleon would have been unthinkable. Princesse Mathilde had remained in Paris. I don't think his Majesty was particularly pleased to find her there. She was far too brusque, too noisy, too utterly callous about what she said and did, to please him.

Owing to the death of the Emperor Maximilian it was not deemed desirable to give any great fêtes, and at Court they restricted themselves to receptions on a small scale. These latter took place at the Tuileries and at St. Cloud, where Madame Arnould Aubresson of the Comédie Française gave a performance of *La Pluie et le beau temps*.

In another chapter, dealing with King Ludwig I of Bavaria, I have already mentioned the many eccentricities in which he indulged, and during which we turned alternately hot and cold, though we were also guilty of many smothered laughs. He was a strange type of king, and I doubt whether any future generation will ever have the chance of seeing such another — Princesse Mathilde, who had no objection whatsoever to risky conversations,

and to whom he said the first thing that came into his head, always called him "that adorable old man"! In that same chapter I also alluded to a great banquet given at the Hôtel de Ville at which the Emperor of Austria was the principal guest. I will only add now that his Majesty made that day in perfect French a speech that was received with acclamations. A Frenchman who was present, wishing to compliment the Archduke Ludwig Victor on the great success of the Emperor's discourse, found nothing better to say than this: "His Majesty did not make one single *fausse liaison!*"

Our Emperor was invited to Compiègne for two days' shooting, and so were we. The bags were as usual magnificent, amounting to 3500 head. There were ten guns, including both Emperors. Our own Emperor was responsible for 600 head. As in another chapter I have already described a shooting-party at Compiègne, and as this one was conducted more or less on exactly the same lines, I will say no more on the subject. But to one thing I really must allude, and that is to the extraordinary carelessness of French sportsmen. Marshal MacMahon himself continually peppered his fellow-sportsmen, and one day actually shot the Emperor in the ear, causing it to bleed profusely. The Marshal apologised, but otherwise was not in the least concerned. French sportsmen actually think it cowardly

to mind anything of the sort when out shooting! It is no use telling them that after all sport is sport, not an engagement with the enemy. All the answer you get is: "Good heavens, how nervous all you foreigners seem to be!"

After dinner, on the first day of our arrival, I waited with some curiosity to see how we should spend the evening, as our Emperor was totally unaccustomed to sit quietly in a drawing-room, talking first to one guest, then to another, or even talking to one person in particular. I asked myself how on earth the Empress would manage! But with her usual tact and knowledge of the world she soon set everything right, and the first thing she did was to ask him whether he would not like to go and smoke his cigar with the Emperor in the latter's study. After half an hour they reappeared just as the other men returned from the smoking-room.

But what was to happen now?

What happened was, of course, the unexpected, for the Empress, beckoning to the Marquis de Castelbajac, one of the Emperor's equerries, asked him whether he would not whistle something, accompanying himself at the same time on the piano. Turning to our Emperor she said in her usual irresistible way, "You can't imagine how deliciously Monsieur de Castelbajac whistles. I am sure you will be delighted with it!" The Emperor was

stupefied ! No one had ever dared to whistle in his presence. But he smiled, though he was visibly embarrassed, sat down, and prepared himself to listen. The amusing part is that he really *was* delighted ; he declared that Monsieur de Castelbajac was a consummate artist in his line, which was quite true, for he whistled really charmingly, and managed to do so with a good deal of feeling.

After the first number of this improvised concert had come to an end, the Empress asked Baron Braun, our Emperor's *chef de cabinet*, to give us a song. She had been told that he sang very well, and had a very beautiful baritone voice. She conducted him herself to the piano.

The Emperor, seeing this, grew quite perturbed.

"What is her Majesty going to do with Baron Braun ?" he asked anxiously.

"Sire," I replied, "the Empress has just asked him to sing."

The Emperor literally bounded in his chair ! He seemed terrified at the mere idea of such a thing. Then he said, and there was a note of acute distress in his voice : "I hope most earnestly that he will refuse to do so."

I answered (rather cruelly) : "But he cannot possibly refuse, Sire ; he has a beautiful voice and sings remarkably well."

"Is it possible ?" gasped the Emperor. "Are you *quite* sure of what you are saying ?

It would be heart-breaking were he to make a fool of himself !"

I tried to reassure his Majesty to the best of my ability.

Baron Braun did *not* make a fool of himself —quite the contrary ; he sang most beautifully and was applauded enthusiastically by everyone present. The Emperor was immensely relieved, and apparently quite delighted at this discovery.

Our Emperor came up to the piano and told me he had enjoyed my singing very much, but he added, " I felt extremely nervous the whole time ; it must be dreadfully trying to sing before such a roomful of people !"

His Majesty was petrified with astonishment when I told him that I was not at all nervous. I said I knew what I was about, and felt perfectly certain of both the music and the words of all my songs, so what was there to be nervous about ? Had I been anything of a courtier I ought, of course, to have said that I did *indeed* feel terrified at the mere idea of performing before so distinguished an audience.

The Emperor looked more astonished than ever, but just then the Empress came up to congratulate me on my little success. She had heard my last words, and turning to the Emperor she said, laughing, " Oh, it is no use flattering ourselves that we inspire her with awe. She isn't at all frightened of us !"

On the 27th of October our Emperor bade their Majesties farewell. He went straight

from Compiègne to Austria. All those who had the good fortune to meet him, remember him with sympathy to this day. It was his absolute lack of affectation, his genuine simplicity, his thoroughly well-bred attitude to men and things, that endeared him to all who met him, from the highest in the land to the lowest, and France took him to her heart with real affection. The French Empress was genuinely attached to him and looked upon him as a real friend. Their relations to each other were always characterised by extreme cordiality, and there was never a break in their friendship.

And whenever I saw the Emperor he never failed to ask for news of the Empress Eugénie, and his last words to me on parting were always, "Tell the Empress that now, as always, I am hers to command."

After the death of our own unfortunate Empress, the poor dear Emperor sent the Empress Eugénie the parasol and fan that she was carrying when she was assassinated in Geneva. I was present when these relics arrived. The Empress was passing through Paris, and I happened to be there at the same time. Her Majesty had not the courage to open the parcel, which she placed upon a table covered with flowers. She scarcely raised her voice above a whisper while she was in the room. The dead woman might have been actually present.

XV

ALEXANDRE DUMAS PÈRE, AND ALEXANDRE DUMAS FILS

(*Paris*, 1868.)

It used to be said of Alexandre Dumas père that he was "one of Nature's forces." As for myself, he always impressed me as an imaginative force such as we are not likely to meet with again for a very long time to come.

We made his acquaintance in Paris through his daughter, Madame Olinde Petel; she was separated from her husband, and called herself Marie Alexandre Dumas. M. Petel had maltreated her to such a degree that life in association was no longer possible, and one day, completely worn out by what she had suffered at his hands, she asked her father whether she might return to him. He was only too glad to welcome her back.

She kept house for him, and it is entirely owing to her that the great novelist did not end his days in want, for he was generous to a fault, spending his money recklessly and giving away to others without a thought of

the possibility that he himself might ultimately be left without enough to live upon.

Madame Marie Dumas was a very religious woman who spent her life in good works. One day she called upon us and begged us to assist her in one of her charitable enterprises, and that was how our acquaintance began. From that time forward we saw a good deal of her. She was an extremely intelligent, well-read woman, who had inherited not only her father's intelligence, but his wonderfully kind heart. She adored her father and was in return adored by him.

On inquiring after him one day she told me that although he enjoyed excellent health he led far too secluded a life, which in her opinion was anything but good for him. I told her how much I regretted his seclusion, not only for his sake but also for my own. She would easily understand that nothing could have interested me more than acquaintance with the author of *The Three Musketeers*. To this remark of mine she made no response at the time, but next day I received a letter from her in which she said, "I told my father how much you wished to know him; he now asks me to tell you that he would very much like to thank you personally, whenever most convenient to yourself, for the many kindnesses you have shown his daughter."

We asked them to dine with us a few days

later; both of them accepted our invitation. We were quite a small party, as they were our only guests, with the exception of the gentlemen attached to the Embassy who, as a matter of course, dined with us every day.

Dumas was enormously stout and looked like a mulatto, although his skin was far from black, but his hair curled tightly like that of a negro. He gave the impression of a stout, good-natured old fellow, with no pretensions of any sort. He was thoroughly at his ease with everyone, I might almost say he was familiar, but without the slightest trace of vulgarity. He always said the right thing and was perfectly natural. We liked him from the very first moment. During dinner he talked a great deal, and I never heard anyone express himself with such complete ease. He touched on every sort of subject. There was nothing he did not seem to know. He really made one feel that he had tried with Pharaoh to cross the Red Sea, that he had helped Dido to found Carthage, that he had invaded Gaul with Julius Cæsar, that Charles the Fifth had been his bosom friend, that he had been a constant visitor at the Court of the Medici, that the secret of the Borgia's poison was to him anything but a secret, that he had spent his entire life at Versailles with Louis the Fourteenth, that he had played cards with Marie Antoinette and the Comte de Provence,

the Comte d'Artois and Count Fersen ; that Charlotte Corday had discussed with him the projected assassination of Marat, and that he had been present at every one of Napoleon's battles.

He was universal, and, like the great novelist he undoubtedly was, never hesitated to depart from the truth whenever it suited him, though this was always done in the most charming and attractive way it is possible to imagine. One listened to him open-mouthed, and had he talked for several days on end, no one would have dreamed of entering a protest. He ate and drank plentifully, talked, gesticulated and laughed while the rest of us found it well-nigh impossible to get through our food, what with listening and admiring at the same time. His words poured forth like a veritable torrent. On leaving the dining-room, while Dumas was sipping his coffee, my husband whispered in my ear : " He has cut you out with a vengeance, he can give you points all along the line, and as to talking, you are not a patch on him ! "

He was quite right—I was utterly squashed ! A mere nightcap in comparison with Dumas ! And I repeat once more that nothing—nothing —nothing on earth can even approximately give an idea of the wonderful vitality, the wonderful versatility of this extraordinary man.

After dinner I asked Dumas whether he was occupied with a new novel. He answered: "Not yet, but I have the subject for one in my head, and one of these days I'll set to work on it."

"And the title?"

"*Création et Rédemption.*"

Madame Marie Dumas was very much astonished at this piece of news. "But, father dear," she exclaimed, "why have you never said a word about it to me? It is too bad of you to have kept me in the dark."

"Well, my child," answered Dumas, "if the Prince and Princess will allow me, I will tell them the story of my new novel, and then you will be among the first to hear it, and it will be a souvenir of the evening we have spent here." And there and then Dumas began his narrative just as if he were reading it aloud: "It was on a cold day in December," etc., etc. He gave us no idea of the plot, he mentioned none of the characters, he went on and on, never hesitating for a word, never making a mistake; every intonation appropriate to each character was correct; in fact it was as if he were reading by heart! And certainly a finer reader never existed, nor is it possible to conceive of a more gifted or accomplished story-teller. This impression nothing will ever be able to efface.

How on earth Dumas was able to remem-

ber all the events that took place in this remarkable story, and how he managed to keep all his numerous characters in sight, how he extricated them from the most complicated situations, and how he finally wound up the whole thing without making a mess of it—all this passes my comprehension. He smoked during the whole narrative, and now and again, whenever he wished to make a special point of anything, he gesticulated ; his hands were beautifully shaped and he was very proud of them. When at last he ceased speaking there was a general cry of "Bravo!" We gathered round him, congratulating him, and assuring him that in all the world he had not his equal as a story-teller, and that he was the finest novelist alive without the shadow of a doubt! He had spoken uninterruptedly for two hours and a half, and not once had he been at a loss for a word.

I thanked him with all the enthusiasm of which I was capable.

"Tell me, M. Dumas, when do you intend to publish *Creation and Redemption?*"

It was my husband who asked this question.

"Well, Prince," he answered, smiling, "I doubt whether it will ever be published. As a matter of fact it was concocted this evening in honour of the Princess, and when I started it I had not the vaguest idea what was going to happen. I invented it as I went along, and

I must confess that at one moment I had crowded so many people into it that I am very much afraid I lost them on the way. Ah, well, they are all dead and gone by now!"

Madame Marie Dumas, who had been feeling slightly aggrieved at having been left in ignorance of her father's literary projects (she being entirely in his confidence with respect to everything concerning them), far from showing any astonishment at this wonderful display of invention, went up to him and said quite simply, "The story you have just told us was simply delicious"; then, turning to us, she said, "I can't tell you how much I enjoy my father's improvisations. Sometimes when we are quite by ourselves, he will tell me all sorts of stories, and I am only sorry that on these occasions there is no one present to take them down in shorthand, for they are often quite beautiful."

After that first visit we saw a good deal of Père Dumas. He sometimes came to the large receptions we held at the Embassy every Thursday evening. When most of the guests had taken their departure he would start telling stories, delighting his audience not only by his inexhaustible flow of language, but by the real charm of the stories themselves.

When my daughter Clementina was born he sent me the following pretty quatrain:

"Je vois des vengeances étranges,
Au ciel contre vous s'amasser,
Si vous lui prenez tous ses anges,
Dieu finira par se lasser!

"À vos pieds,

"ALEX. DUMAS."

Biarritz, 5 *Juillet*, 1870.

These lines are to be found in a collection of autographs which also contains some of his letters. His handwriting was beautiful, and he enjoyed the admiration it called forth. After his death, in the codicil of his will was found a legacy to me in the following words:

"I leave to Madame La Princesse de Metternich my beautiful sapphire as a token of admiration and respectful attachment, and I beg of her to keep it in remembrance of an old novelist who was very fond of her."

I had this sapphire mounted on a perfectly plain gold band. To my husband he left his writing-table and his chair. The top of the table is one mass of writing. Both these objects are now in the family museum at the Castle of Königswart in Bohemia.

Alexandre Dumas fils I first met at the Tuileries, where he asked to be presented to me. He went out a good deal and I often met him in society, and also at our own Embassy. Though he was not very like his father, still, there was a certain family resemblance which often struck those who knew

them both, and though his hair was fair, inclining to red, it was so tightly curled that it clearly indicated a strain of black blood. The grandmother of Dumas père was a mulatto, and her master, the Marquis Davy de la Pailleterie, married her. The real name of the Dumas was Davy de la Pailleterie, but the grandfather of the author of *Antony* dropped both name and title at the time of the great revolution, when he took the name Dumas, which, owing to his son and grandson, has become celebrated throughout the world.

Alexandre Dumas fils was the very opposite of his father. At first he struck one as cold and profoundly cynical, whereas the older man produced an immediate impression of good-nature and singular kind-heartedness. As far as brains were concerned they were about equal, but their characters, their tastes, their points of view, their modes of expression were as far removed from each other as the North Pole from the South. The father was trustful, demonstrative, exceedingly eloquent ; the son, always on his guard, very reserved, never let himself go, unless surrounded by people who suited him in every respect. On these occasions he certainly outshone his father in wit, but as a story-teller he was incomparably inferior to his father, whose wonderful *verve* was something unique. Old Dumas looked out on to the world through rose-coloured

spectacles, he saw only the best, the finest side of men and things. Women were goddesses in his eyes—men the most chivalrous of knights. His son, on the contrary, was of opinion that the world was even uglier than it seems; he was convinced that base and unworthy motives lie at the root of every action; women, according to him, were never actuated by feelings of real nobility; in a word, he looked upon the whole human race with profound contempt. It was impossible not to love the father, not to trust him completely, but one was always on one's guard with the son for fear of being harshly judged.

Just as people spoke of the elder Dumas as "one of Nature's forces," so, in a recent discourse, allusion was made to his son as "the conscience of human nature." He dug deep into the human heart, but whereas he brought to light only worthless rock, his father, on the contrary, discovered nothing but pure gold.

As far as I am concerned I prefer the illusions of the one to the disgusts of the other. Alexandre Dumas fils professed the greatest admiration for his father, and the father always spoke with enthusiasm about the talent and wit of his son. The latter, notwithstanding his very real affection for his father, did not mind amusing himself—and others—at his expense.

One day, for instance, the conversation

having turned on the vanity of mankind in general, he could not resist the temptation of saying: "Well, now, take my father as an example; he is so vain that he is quite capable of seating himself on the box of his own carriage in order to make people believe that he keeps a negro footman!"—a remark that is certainly lacking in respect.

One day I was talking to him about his father, and happened to say that in my opinion he did not possess the gift of repartee to the same degree as himself, but he said it was quite equal to his own, and told me the following story. They were travelling together in Switzerland. On arriving at the hotel in Lucerne, they were going up to their rooms to bed, when old Dumas discovered that their portmanteau had been left behind at the Rigi hotel from which they had just come. "There now," he cried, "if we haven't left that d—— portmanteau behind—what asses we are!" "Well," said Alexandre fils, "you aren't very polite! There is no need to say *we*." "Of course there isn't," answered his father. "What an ass *you* are!"

"You see," he added, laughing, "he could be quick enough when he chose."

On another occasion a lady, one of his most devoted admirers, begged him to allow her to recite some verses of her own composition which she had written in his honour. Seating

himself in his huge arm-chair, he prepared himself to listen. The lady, overcome with emotion, began in a faltering voice:

"Oh, Alexandre, dont le nom bril——"[1]

Dumas interrupted her there and then. "Now look here," said he, "don't you go into ecstasies over something you have never seen!"

One day while chatting with the younger Dumas I took him to task for the incessant abuse which, in his novels, he levelled at the entire human race. To this he answered: "It is our duty, as writers, to represent people as they actually are, not as they ought to be."

I, in my turn, replied: "Well, monsieur, in life, as in nature, there are rainy days and sunny days. You prefer walking about in the mud, and I prefer sunny weather."

He was silent for a moment, then he said: "Perhaps it always rains in our country!"

"That is just where you are wrong, if you will allow me to say so," I answered with some heat. "You do your best to persuade the whole world that your point of view is the correct one, whereas I can assure you that there are thousands of far finer French men and women than you have any idea of."

We often had similar discussions, and, far

[1] The poor lady was evidently going to say, "dont le nom brille," but unfortunately she was interrupted at a critical moment, for *nombril* means *navel* in French.

from resenting my outbursts, he would often wind up by agreeing with me.

When the exhibition of musical and dramatic art took place in Vienna, he not only wrote me a charming letter, but also sent me a beautifully bound copy of his famous play *Visite de noces*, in which Aimée Desclée appeared with such success. Two autographs were enclosed with the book, a letter written by him to the artiste and her answer to that letter.

XVI

THE YEAR OF THE WAR, 1870

THE opening of the Legislative Assembly had taken place at the Louvre, in the vast "Salle des États." The Emperor had made his regulation speech. Several new deputies were to take the oath that day. When M. Henri Rochefort's name was read out, the Minister of the Emperor's household paused for a moment, expecting to hear the usual responses, "Present" and "I Swear"; but the only sound audible was the agitated murmur provoked by the eloquent absence of the deputy representing the Extreme Left. M. Émile Ollivier passed over this incident in silence. The Emperor was acclaimed as usual on leaving the Salle des États, and the same cordial welcome was given to the Empress and the Prince Imperial.

We went down to where our carriage stood waiting for us, and drove away. When our *coupé* reached the Rue de Rivoli it was surrounded by a surging crowd, imbued, it was easy to see, with feelings of ill-will, amounting in some cases to positive hatred. Not only

did they hurl the most offensive remarks at us, but we were grossly insulted into the bargain. I remember saying to my husband: "The Emperor's day is over." Nevertheless I little thought how soon my words were to prove true, for had anyone told me at that moment that a republic would be proclaimed in France before five months were out, my surprise would have been great indeed. I merely thought the Empire was slowly but surely crumbling away and would gradually cease to exist, for one could not help feeling that the hand that held the reins had slackened. The Emperor had made so many concessions that his prestige was fading away. Yet the plebiscite had given seven million votes in his favour in the month of May, and a new era had apparently been inaugurated, when the question of the Spanish succession arose. General Prim suggested Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern as a possible candidate for the throne, but France flatly refused to entertain this idea, and war was declared at almost a moment's notice.

The history of this unfortunate war has been written again and again, and I have no intention of wearying my readers by going over the same old ground. Besides, in writing these memoirs I do not wish to depart in any way from my original intention, which was merely to record my personal impression of

things seen by my own eyes and heard with my own ears.

Towards the end of May we left the hotel in the Rue de l'Élysée for La Jonchère, near Bougival. This hotel belonged to the Empress, and she had very kindly allowed us to rent it from her while the Hôtel Rothschild, in the Rue Lafitte, was being prepared for us. We intended to make this latter house our permanent residence from January, 1871, onwards, the former Embassy at 101 Rue de Grenelle having been retaken by the State and turned once more into a Government office.

The Villa de la Jonchère was charming. I was expecting my confinement, and wished it to take place there, for rumours of war were being persistently circulated, a general upheaval seemed to be in process, and France appeared to have but one thought—war with Prussia! There was a constant stream of visitors to La Jonchère, and one and all were of the same opinion; the French would make but short work of the Prussians. Our opinion did not at all coincide with theirs, but naturally we did not venture to contradict them. As a matter of fact, our military attaché, an extremely able officer, had told us that, as far as he was able to judge, the French armaments appeared to be incomplete; he felt certain the army was in nowise prepared to take the field. He added that the Schleswig-Holstein

war had gone far to reveal the colossal forces at the disposal of the German army, and feared that the French were indulging in dreams which were likely to prove fatal to themselves, did they not speedily awake to the fact that to tackle so formidable an enemy might be a far from easy task.

After the war in 1866 the Marquis de Galliffet handed me a sealed letter which he begged me not to open until the French had fought their first battle with the Prussians. I locked it up in my jewel-box, and though I often longed to read it, I did not do so until after the battle of Forbach. I will give the contents of this letter in due time.

One day the old Baronne James de Rothschild called upon me at La Jonchère. Her patriotism refused to entertain the idea of anything but victory for the French arms. I ventured to suggest that perhaps it might be as well to be prepared for an occasional reverse, but she scouted the mere idea of such a possibility. "France will beat Prussia, and will be victorious all along the line," she cried indignantly.

My daughter Clementina was born on the morning of the 27th June. A fortnight later, wrapped in an old dressing-gown, I was lying on the sofa in my bedroom, with a travelling rug over my knees, when my maid rushed in like a whirlwind. She looked demented. In

a voice trembling with excitement she said, "Something dreadful has happened! something too dreadful!"

"Good God!" I exclaimed. "What is the matter?" I was really terrified.

"The Emperor and Empress are here and wish to see you."

I breathed again.

"Well, let their Majesties be told that I shall be very happy if they will do me the honour to come in."

The poor maid was in despair at the idea of my receiving such august visitors in so shabby an old dressing-gown, and loudly lamented the fact that, having a really charming new wrapper in my wardrobe, I had been caught unawares in such an old one!

I consoled her to the best of my ability, and got rid of her by telling her to let their Majesties know at once that I was quite ready to receive them. The Emperor and Empress were just then in residence at St. Cloud, and had very kindly driven over to inquire after me. They immediately excused themselves for disturbing me, saying that they were under the impression that I was already up and about and able to receive guests. I explained that although in one way I felt quite equal to seeing anyone, I was handicapped, physically, by circumstances which accounted for the very evident lack of pomp and splendour in my

outward appearance. I told them the story of my maid's despair, which much amused them, the Emperor assuring me that he was in absolute sympathy with me in preferring an old dressing-gown to a new one, and that as far as he and the Empress were concerned, they had come to see me entirely for my own sake and for nothing else.

In the course of conversation, the Emperor's thoughts seemed to dwell on one subject alone—the probable outbreak of war. The Empress dreaded the very idea of such a possibility, and those who accuse her of having relentlessly encouraged the war party are guilty of an impudent lie. I am in a position to affirm that they both shrank with horror from the thought of involving their country in such a calamity ; their greatest desire was to prevent an outbreak of hostilities.

"Every effort will be made," said the Emperor, "to preserve peace. But my great fear is that the people themselves, in the heat of their patriotism, may let loose a torrent of dangerous enthusiasm which it may be impossible to stem, and which may eventually force the hand of the Government. Public opinion will have its own way in these days."

The Emperor was seated opposite me, leaning on a stick he invariably carried about with him. It was made of rhinoceros horn topped with an eagle's head in gold. I can see it now.

"Should France be victorious, Sire, as we all earnestly hope she may be, what course would you pursue? Would you take possession of the Rhine?"

"I should not care to do that. My idea would be to restore Westphalia and the Rhenish provinces to Duke Adolphe of Nassau, who was dispossessed of them. It would be well to get rid of the Grand Duke of Baden, who is hand-in-glove with Prussia, and the kingdom of Hanover should be enlarged, with King George (who was also deposed by the Prussians) at its head. It is quite certain that the map of Central Europe would have to be remodelled to a considerable extent. But all these plans are mere castles in the air, and by far the best thing we can do is to try and avoid a collision."

The Empress was absolutely of the same opinion. "Ah," she cried, "God grant it may not come to war, but should the honour of France be the price of peace the calamity would be equally great, and the whole country would rise in protest." And from that point of view alone can the Empress be said to have been in favour of war.

On the flight of steps leading up to the house their Majesties met my husband. He had been to Paris as usual, to the Embassy. At the sight of the crowd gathered outside the gates of the villa, his first feeling had been one

of alarm ; he was afraid that an accident had occurred. But close to the house he recognised some of the Emperor's people ; they were waiting for their Majesties to appear before calling up the carriages.

The next time I saw the Emperor Napoleon was at Chislehurst, after the war ; and I never saw the Empress again till we met in England at Hastings in September of that same year.

The Emperor's anticipations had proved correct. The stream had become a raging torrent. Prussia was only too anxious to fight ; all that she had been able to learn with regard to the French army was of a nature to inspire her with confidence. Diplomacy was forced into silence, and the voice of the cannon triumphed over every other.

War was declared.

The Emperor left St. Cloud, taking with him the Prince Imperial—a terrible mistake on his part. The Empress became Regent, and her martyrdom dates from that moment.

One day, on his return from Paris, my husband came to see me, with an expression of such consternation on his face that I guessed immediately at some terrible disaster.

"What has occurred?" I asked him anxiously.

He answered : "I have just come from the Tuileries, where I saw the Empress. She

showed me a telegram which the Emperor had addressed to her from Forbach. It contained these words: 'Nothing is ready; our troops are insufficient; in my opinion we are already lost.'"

I was horror-struck!

It seems that the Empress, before acquainting my husband with the dreadful news contained in the telegram, had said to him: "This is what I have just received from the Emperor. I know you are our friend; one of our truest and best friends, and it is not to the Austrian Ambassador that I now confide the news I have just received, but to our friend. Read this telegram, and swear to me, on your honour, that with the exception of the Princess you will not mention its contents to any living soul."

We faithfully kept this dreadful secret, and no one will ever know the tortures we went through when visitors to our house held forth enthusiastically and confidently on the future successes of the French army, which, according to them, was a matter of absolute certainty. Unable to reveal, or even to allow anyone to suspect what we already knew, we were obliged to listen to all that was said as though we actually believed it.

There were times when we were even reproached with indifference. Such was the case when the Marquis de Massa came to

see me early one morning. He spoke of beating the Prussians with such blind confidence that I could not help reminding him that they were formidable adversaries, not to be dismissed as a negligible quantity, and that he had apparently forgotten the way they carried all before them in 1866—a fact that it might be well to remember. But that France should share the fate of Austria seemed to him an absolute impossibility which he refused point-blank to contemplate even for a moment. We discussed the subject with a certain amount of bitterness, for I very much resented the way he spoke of the Austrian army, rating it as greatly inferior to the French army, and when we parted, it was not on the best of terms. Alas, alas, only a few days later this kind and faithful friend returned to see me, only to break down completely in the very same place where he had so confidently predicted the triumphal entry of the French troops into Berlin.

Meanwhile enthusiasm reigned supreme in Paris. Cries of "À Berlin ! à Berlin !" were heard on all sides. The people were intoxicated, and it is really no use telling me now (as some of my acquaintances are still so fond of doing) that they were not in favour of war. *Everyone* was in favour of war. I speak especially of Paris, where young and old were literally mad on the subject.

The old Duc de Grammont on leaving the Senate shouted "À Berlin!" at the top of his voice, not only while getting into his carriage, but all the way from the Luxembourg to the Jockey Club. He waved his hat in the air and behaved altogether like a lunatic, and instead of laughing at him, everyone extolled his patriotism to the skies! People had completely lost their heads.

One regiment after the other left for the frontier, but the sight of their departure was heartbreaking. There was a deplorable lack of discipline among the men; it was not at all an unusual experience for the officers in command to find that soldiers by the dozen had slipped out of the ranks, and had seated themselves round the little tables outside the cafés, or that they had crowded into wine-shops, where they drank not only what they pleased, but as much as they pleased. It was impossible to keep these laggards together, and my husband has seen with his own eyes officers arrive at the Gare de l'Est followed by no more than fifty soldiers. The rest had fallen behind, and the disciplined were obliged to wait until they chose to join them. One day our military attaché (whom I have already mentioned) took my husband to see one of these departures. In his opinion this want of discipline was a source of terrible danger to the country. Of course he knew nothing

about the Emperor's telegram to the Empress, but he maintained that these undisciplined and unmanageable troops constituted an undeniable proof of the actual condition of the army. "Believe me," said he, "the French are done for—irrevocably done for!"

His Majesty had been perfectly right, and had seen things in their true light from the very beginning. His clear and lucid mind was not to be led astray by the absurd harangues to which he was obliged to listen and with which he was deluged on every side. To him the sad and inevitable truth was only too evident. The poor Emperor was already suffering from the cruel malady that was to put an end to his days, and from every point of view the whole campaign—for him—must have been a veritable Calvary.

As news poured in from the theatre of war, the faith of even the most incorrigible optimists began to give way. Defeat followed upon defeat. One night—it was about 2 A.M.—I heard voices in my husband's room, which opened out of mine. I heard him say, "I will be with you in a moment; just give me time to get into my clothes."

"Who is there?" I cried. "What is the matter?" The door opened and Richard came in hurriedly. "The Empress has sent Poniatowski for me; he does not know why she wants to see me, but evidently there has

been some terrible catastrophe. I must be off at once." A moment later the door was shut with a loud bang, and I heard the horses gallop away.

This is what had happened. The Empress had just received the fatal news announcing the battle of Wörth and the battle of Reichshofen. The Emperor's telegram was worded thus : "Terrible disaster. Total defeat."

The poor Empress was in despair—her distress was unspeakable, and she wished to see her faithful friend, to ask him to stand by her in this bitter moment, to tell her what steps to take. Richard advised her to leave for Paris without a moment's delay (this interview had taken place at St. Cloud), and to call an immediate meeting of all the Ministers. Her Majesty immediately agreed to this. My husband and Poniatowski followed in another carriage, and it was not long before they reached Paris. Richard was dropped at the Embassy at about four o'clock in the morning.

Telegrams had been sent from St. Cloud advising the Ministers to present themselves immediately at the Tuileries. When my husband returned to La Jonchère he told me that the Empress had fully realised the danger of the situation. She felt certain the Empire would fall within a very short time, should France continue to suffer defeat. It was then that I opened the sealed letter given me by

General Galliffet. I read the following words: "When the time comes for the French to fight the Prussians, they will be thrashed by us, as no human beings have ever been thrashed within the memory of man!"—Monsieur de Galliffet has never been able to forgive himself for this arrogant prediction of his.

The Ministers who took counsel together during those early hours were of opinion that the Empress would do well to advise the Emperor to return to Paris. But she was entirely opposed to this plan, fearing that the return of the Emperor would be the signal for a popular rising which might entail fatal consequences. Whether she was right or wrong I am quite unable to judge. Defeat followed on defeat, and the anxiety at the Tuileries increased to such a degree that one morning—it was about nine o'clock, and I was still in bed—my door was thrown open and, to my stupefaction, la Duchesse de Malakoff was shown in. She was accompanied by Madame Pollet, usually known as "La Pepa." She had been in her Majesty's service when she was Comtesse de Teba, and now acted as her treasurer. Both women were pale and trembling. The poor duchess could hardly speak—her tears were choking her. But she came and stood by my bedside, and putting her arms round me, she said, "It is no

longer safe to leave anything at the Tuileries. We are on the eve of a catastrophe, and we have entreated the Empress to allow us to bring her jewels away. We thought of you. Will you take charge of them ? In this way you will be able to save part of her Majesty's fortune." I was aghast at the idea of such a responsibility, and my dismay increased as they unpacked the jewels and showed me the priceless treasures they wished to leave in my care. There had been no time to take an inventory. Some of the cases were missing, and all these diamonds and pearls and countless other precious stones were merely wrapped up in newspaper ! Madame Pollet was crying—her tears fell on my hands, which she held fast in her own, as she besought me not to refuse the care of these jewels. Of course I agreed to everything, adding, however, that being obliged to take them without an inventory I could accept no other responsibility than that of promising to do all that lay in my power to ensure their safety ; I also undertook to send them to some absolutely safe place the moment I had the chance of doing so.

After the departure of these ladies I sent for my maid. She had been with me ever since my marriage and was a woman in whom I had absolute confidence. I showed her the wonderful jewels that lay spread on my bed, and told her what had happened, adding, that

it was necessary to keep the whole matter a dead secret. Together we discussed where it would be best to hide them, and at last we decided on a little cupboard where I kept my boots and shoes. Who would dream of looking for anything valuable in so unlikely a place? The maid went off to fetch some tissue-paper, and then we set to work to wrap up these superb tiaras, ropes of pearls, bracelets, brooches, earrings, diamond chains, rows of solitaires, aigrettes, and precious stones of every kind, stowing them away in an ordinary cardboard box.

My husband had gone to the Embassy unusually early that morning. On his return I told him all about my visitors, but he already knew their object in coming to see me. He had called at the Tuileries, where he had had an interview with the Empress. His plan was to despatch the jewels to London in the care of one of our attachés, and to deposit them at the Bank of England. Two days later, Count Rodolphe de Montgelas left France with a portmanteau containing a number of loose parcels. Owing to its size it had been impossible to get the cardboard box into the bag, and even at the risk of damaging the settings, the jewels had been taken out and piled one on the top of the other. We did not, however, worry ourselves too much about that, the great thing being to get them

out of the country and secure the safety of the actual stones themselves

Count de Montgelas met with many difficulties in London, where at first they refused to accept the custody of these jewels; what their reasons were I do not know. But it was not until the Austrian Ambassador himself persuaded the Bank of England to do so, that our envoy was able to deposit the portmanteau there with his own hands. He was handed a receipt, and was told that the portmanteau and its contents being his own property, no one but himself would have the right to claim them at any future time. In this way he suddenly found himself the actual possessor of all her Majesty's jewels!

The situation became more and more serious; at last, when even the environs of Paris were no longer safe, everything being in a state of dissolution, my husband determined to send me away with the children, and, strange to say, chose Calais as our refuge. I was still weak from my recent confinement when we hurriedly decided on this departure. We left La Jonchère on the 13th of August, accompanied by Count Rodolphe von Khevenhüller, attaché to the Austrian Embassy. I remember an unpleasant incident that occurred at one of the stations (I have forgotten its name), where we were obliged to change trains. My maid, who spoke nothing but German, was

talking to me at the top of her voice, which was shrill and piercing. My nerves were on edge, for I felt certain that we should be subjected to unpleasant remarks from the people on the platform, and sure enough a man walked up to me, and examining me from head to foot he said contemptuously: "Another of those d—— Germans on the run!" I looked him straight in the face and said: "We do not happen to be Germans, monsieur, we are Austrians, and, like yourselves, know what it is to have been beaten by the Prussians." He muttered an apology and turned away.

At Calais we stayed at the Hôtel Dessin, a most depressing place, situated in a street as dark and narrow as it was noisy. My room looked out on to a carpenter's shop—a locksmith shared it with him. The noise made by these two men from six o'clock in the morning till late in the evening was positively infernal.

Next day, after having been for a dreary walk on the pier—the only place from which the sea was visible, and even then it was necessary to walk to the very end in order to catch a glimpse of it—I decided to send my footman to Boulogne, in order to look for rooms. He started the following morning and returned with the welcome news that he had been able to secure an apartment at the Pavillon Impérial for the next day.

That morning I went with my children and their governess to the cathedral, where High Mass was being celebrated. It was the Feast of the Assumption. The 15th of August being also the Emperor's fête-day, all the civil and military authorities were present. I shall never forget how painfully I was impressed. On leaving the church both the governess and myself felt as though we had been present at a funeral—the funeral of the Empire. Little groups of people were stationed everywhere, exchanging newspapers, and tearing out of each other's hands the telegrams that poured in from the front. Optimism still prevailed, as far as we were able to judge from the hopeful remarks that were made after reading the telegrams, to the effect that Bazaine might succeed in keeping the Prussians at bay, and that, backed up by MacMahon and Bourbaki, he would lead the French to victory.

The next morning (16th of August) we took the train to Boulogne, and I cannot say how thankful I was to get out of Calais. Boulogne was infinitely preferable from every point of view, and it was with real pleasure that we made our way to the Hôtel du Pavillon Impérial, and took possession of our simple little rooms, which looked out on to the sea.

We had just settled down and had been for

a little walk on the pier, when we saw la Duchesse de Mouchy and her children. They had just arrived. Her husband had been anxious for her to leave Mouchy, and had sent them to Boulogne so that, should affairs in France take on too threatening an aspect, they might immediately cross over to England. It was with this same object in view that my husband had sent us to Calais, which in comparison with Boulogne is quite uninhabitable.

La Duchesse de Mouchy and I arranged to club together, and between us we engaged a little sitting-room. We took our meals downstairs in the common dining-room, and life would have flowed along peacefully enough had it not been so cruelly disturbed by the depression and misery caused by the alarming news from Paris. Our joy can be imagined when one day M. William de la Rive appeared on the scene; he had come straight from Paris, bringing us direct news of our husbands; we received him with open arms, for we had no friends in Boulogne. We had only each other to talk to, and the conversation had turned so perpetually on all we had been through, and all that the future might bring forth, that we were completely demoralised. The most absurd rumours were always being circulated; to give only one instance, my maid one day rushed into my room, while I

was still in bed, telling me that Boulogne was to be bombarded. The French Fleet had been in the harbour since daybreak, and the bombardment was expected to begin from one moment to another ; the real fact being that three French men-of-war were quietly lying at anchor in the harbour.

The news from the front grew worse and worse ; our anxiety increased with every hour, till at last, on the 4th of September, we received the dreadful telegram announcing the capitulation of Sedan. The Emperor had been taken prisoner !

I shall make no attempt to describe either the distress of la Duchesse de Mouchy or the profound anxiety we both felt with regard to the unfortunate Empress ; our husbands, too, were in danger ; we trembled for their safety ; we feared that a revolution might break out in Paris—that blood would flow as a natural consequence ! But at five o'clock next morning we received telegrams both from Monsieur de Mouchy and my husband, advising us to leave Boulogne for London and to remain there till all was over.

Monsieur de Montgelas brought us our passports and very kindly offered to take the children to Brussels ; from there they would be able to travel straight through to Johannisberg Castle. At five p.m. la Duchesse de Montmorency (*née* Agnado) arrived at the

Hôtel du Pavillon with her little three-year-old son.

On the morning of that same day we went through an anxious time. This is what happened. La Duchesse de Mouchy, who had completely broken down, refused point-blank to stir from the hotel, so M. de la Rive and I went for a little walk on the beach. On our return she met us on the stairs. She was quite distracted. Dragging us into the little sitting-room, she told us that M. Cahen d'Anvers had been to see her, that he felt it to be his duty to acquaint her with the very serious turn that affairs had taken. The town was in an uproar, a Republic had been proclaimed in Paris, and the inhabitants of Boulogne were preparing to attack the Hôtel du Pavillon, knowing that la Duchesse de Mouchy, a niece of their Majesties, had taken shelter there. His advice was to leave the hotel at once—to flee—no matter whither! But there was no train, no boat leaving Boulogne before ten o'clock that night, and it was only two o'clock at present! M. de la Rive, furious at the imbecile way this man had frightened the poor Duchess, did his best to quiet her, offering to go at once to the Mairie to find out the real state of affairs. He said he did not believe for one moment that M. Cahen d'Anvers' information was correct, for the simple reason that during our

little walk we had seen no signs of any disturbance whatsoever; on the contrary, everything was perfectly quiet. He then went out and was absent for about an hour. He came back with good news. No one had given us a thought, and the peaceable inhabitants of Boulogne were not even dreaming of attacking our hotel. The whole town was in a perfectly quiet condition. Our kind friend was so angry with M. Cahen d'Anvers, that, after having reassured us, he seized his hat and was off like lightning to have it out with him, not only for alarming Madame de Mouchy so unnecessarily, but also for spreading so senseless a report. He told him it was utterly unworthy of any decent man to go round frightening women out of their senses with such contemptible gossip, and that instead of listening to the tittle-tattle of waiters and servants, he would do a great deal better to find out for himself what was, and what was not, true. In a word, he rated him so soundly that, as far as we were concerned, he never dared show his face again—which was entirely to our advantage.

We then made arrangements to go to Calais by train, starting on the 6th of September. From there the children would be able to travel straight to Brussels, branching off at St. Pierre de Calais. We were accompanied by M. Cecil Standish, a cousin of la Duchesse

de Mouchy. On arriving at Calais we caught sight of M. Rouher, one of the Emperor's former Ministers. He also was on his way to England, but was rather upset at not having been able to procure a passport, and was afraid that he would be prevented from embarking by the Commissaire de Police, whose duty it was to superintend the departure of all travellers to England. I told him he could travel with me if he would consent to pass as my footman. He accepted my offer, and together we walked along the pier till we reached the gangway leading on to the steamer. Telling M. Rouher and the maid to go on in front, and turning to the Commissaire de Police, I said: "My maid and footman." He winked and whispered in my ear: "Very good, very good, but all the same it is M. Rouher you have got there!"

There was a considerable crowd on the pier watching the embarkation of the travellers; it was in a frankly hostile mood.

"Look at the runaways from the Tuileries!" or, "There go the betrayers of the Empire!" was heard on all sides. The captain looked anxious and ordered the sailors to hurry up. The gangway was just about to be drawn up when several evil-looking individuals made a rush for the boat, screaming, "Down with the traitors!" It was then that the captain shouted—in a stentorian voice which rings in

my ears to this day: "In gangway! Half-speed ahead!"

Monsieur de la Rive, to whom we bade good-bye at Calais, was returning to Paris. La Duchesse de Mouchy and myself had invented a little code, which would enable him to communicate with us without anyone being able to understand the telegrams that passed between us. They were to be addressed to Miss Quick, the English nurse in the service of the Duchess. "Charles" stood for the Emperor, "Alfred" for the Empress, and so on. We both had a copy of this code, and in this way it was possible to supply us with information about the people we were interested in without the post-office clerks being any the wiser. M. de la Rive promised faithfully to let us know what had actually befallen their Majesties.

The boat in which we crossed over to England was called *The Prince Imperial!*

My husband had managed to send me the Book of Hours that had once belonged to Queen Marie Antoinette, in order that I might, in my turn, hand it over to the Empress. He had removed it from the table in her Majesty's sitting-room in order that it might run no risk of being lost in the confusion of her departure. And now I held it in my hand and meditated on the strange destiny of men and things. The Austrian

Ambassadress was carrying away as a precious relic the Book of Hours that, according to the inscription on the fly-leaf, had been given to the unfortunate Queen by her mother, the Empress Maria Theresa, and that years afterwards had become the property of the lovely Spaniard who by a strange freak of destiny had been placed upon the same throne as herself!

I stood on deck as we steamed out of Calais, and with an aching heart I bade farewell to France, where the happiest and most brilliant years of my youth had been spent. But if it was a sad farewell it was also a grateful one. The sovereigns had bestowed on me their very real friendship, and great affection had fallen to my lot, affection which never failed me in after life, and to which I also have been faithful and true.

XVII

IN ENGLAND

On arriving in London we went straight to Fleming's Hotel, and there we waited (how impatiently I need not say) for the news that Monsieur de la Rive was to send us from Paris. Next day, the 7th of September, while la Duchesse de Mouchy and I were at luncheon, we received the welcome telegram. We at once made a rush for the code, which had been put away in one of our blotting-books, but to our dismay it was nowhere to be found. We were in despair, for without it we were unable to make head or tail of the enigma which had just been put into our hands.

"Alfred in low spirits but is being well looked after. . . . Charles has left, but where he has gone to no one knows," etc., etc. And the telegram contained at least eighty words, none—or few—of which we were able to decipher.

Shortly after the arrival of this telegram I received a letter from my husband announcing the flight of the Empress, and begging me to send him news of her as soon as possible, as he had no idea in what direction she had gone on

leaving Paris. This letter was followed by a telegram. Terribly anxious, and in complete ignorance of what had happened to the Empress, after her escape from the Tuileries, Richard again begged me to let him know what had become of her as soon as I was myself able to glean any information on the subject.

Our anxiety equalled his, but at last, after a delay of twenty-four hours, we heard from Lord Granville, who was Minister of Foreign Affairs at that time, that her Majesty was at Hastings.

We at once made up our minds to go and see her, and early next morning both of us went down to Hastings. Lord Granville had given us her address, so we were able to go straight to the hotel where she was staying.

On being shown into the ugly, commonplace little drawing-room where she was sitting, something seemed to break into pieces in my heart, and crying bitterly I threw myself into her arms.

The Empress, although shaken to the foundation of her being, and though her eyes were full of tears, was perfectly resigned and full of courage. Her thoughts were entirely concentrated on the Emperor. The Prince Imperial had joined his mother. He had been stationed on the Belgian frontier with his tutor, and had only needed to cross it to ensure

his perfect safety. This fact alone proves what a mistake it was to have allowed a child of his age to accompany the army, since it was found necessary to provide a shelter for him at the first approach of real danger.

The Empress had left the Tuileries after being persuaded to take this step, not only by my husband, but also by Cavaliere Nigra, the Italian Ambassador. Both of them had seen the huge and ever-increasing crowd that was streaming toward the Palace, hurling threats at the sovereign, and both had fully realised the appalling danger to which she would be exposed if she persisted in her determination to remain there. The despicable attitude of General Trochu, who was in command at Paris, and who was so forgetful of his duty that he did not even make an attempt to defend her, was another reason for insisting on her departure, for what was to become of her if left alone and unprotected ?

At first the Empress flatly refused to leave the Palace, but finally she yielded to their persistent entreaties, and, accompanied by her reader, Madame Lebreton (*née* Bourbaki), she made up her mind to follow them. The ladies and gentlemen of the Household were all in an adjoining room, and not until a quarter of an hour later were they informed that the Empress had left her apartments, and that, owing to the terrible events that were taking place, she had

been persuaded to leave the Tuileries. Admiral Jurien de la Gravière, as far as I am able to recollect, took it upon himself to make this announcement, at the same time advising them all to leave the Palace, and return to their respective homes.

The Empress crossed the Louvre and reached the gate opposite the Church of St. Germain l'Auxerrois. Her Majesty was leaning on my husband's arm, the tears were running down her cheeks, but she never spoke a word, her whole attitude being a silent protest against this flight, which she condemned as cowardly and ignoble.

The great gate was locked. The two men got hold of the gate-keeper and told him to open it, so as to allow them to pass through. He refused, saying that he had strict orders forbidding anyone to leave by that gate. Richard took him by the shoulders and ordered him to get the key and open the gate without another moment's delay. The unfortunate man did not dare refuse so peremptory an order, and obeyed without further ado, but outside the gate they found themselves hemmed in on all sides by an immense crowd which was listening to the incendiary speech of a street orator, perched high upon a wall. Fortunately these people had their backs turned to the Louvre and did not notice the fugitives, who, slipping in and out of their midst, tried

to find a fiacre for the Empress. At last they saw one and hailed it. Both ladies got in. At that very moment a street-boy, happening to turn round, and seeing them, exclaimed, "Halloa, the Empress!" But hardly were the words out of his mouth before my husband seized him, holding him in so tight a grasp that he nearly strangled him. Meanwhile Cavaliere Nigra, giving the cabman an address, told him to whip up his horse and drive away at full speed. The man did as he was bidden, and Richard and Nigra followed the fiacre with their eyes till it was out of sight, bearing in both their hearts a veritable agony, as they asked themselves whether she would ever reach her destination safely, whether she would ever succeed in getting out of France without being arrested.

This is what actually happened. The address given the cabman by Nigra was one that had been given him by Madame Lebreton, and was the address of one of her friends, a person but little known, at whose house she very rightly thought no one would dream of looking for the Empress. Alas, Madame X. was not at home. They went to another friend, but only to find the house shut up. It was then that the Empress thought of Dr. Thomas Evans, who lived in a private villa of his own in the Avenue de l'Impératrice ; she knew she could count on him. Fortunately he was at

home and received the royal fugitive with open arms. But he strongly advised her not to remain in Paris ; he urged her to leave at once, and offered to accompany her. In twenty minutes his carriage was at the door. Dr. Evans ordered his coachman to make straight for the coast with the idea of getting her Majesty over to England. With the details of this journey I am not acquainted. I only know that no boat was available, and that Dr. Evans most fortunately came across a gentleman he knew [1] whose yacht was lying in the harbour. This gentleman at once consented to take both her Majesty and Madame Lebreton on board. They had a terrible crossing. The Empress told me that once or twice she felt certain the yacht would be wrecked. She said she remembered thinking how useless it was to try and evade one's destiny. What did it matter whether she perished at the hands of the mob, or whether she was drowned at sea? Fortunately her anticipation was mistaken (I will not say "her *fear*," for really the Empress was absolutely fearless where she personally was concerned), and she landed safe and sound on British soil, *i. e.* at Hastings, where we found her in such dreary surroundings.

In the hurry of departure (for the crowd was already at the very doors of the Tuileries,

[1] Sir John Burgoyne.

threatening to force its way in) my husband and Nigra had hardly given her time to collect even the strictest necessaries, telling her that the moment they knew her address they would despatch her maids with all she required. Her Majesty telegraphed immediately after her arrival, but for the moment she was totally unprovided for, and the Duchess and I sent her linen of our own, with a few other indispensable toilet accessories.

The Republic had been proclaimed in France. The Emperor was a prisoner at Wilhelmshöhe, and our last hope—if indeed it were possible to entertain any hope at all—was in Bazaine, who, with 150,000 men, still held out at Metz. To be quite frank, I must confess that the Empress had but little faith in him. As far as the army was concerned she still was Regent; it had not yet been absolved from its oath of allegiance to the Emperor, and though she wished to go to Wilhelmshöhe, it was impossible for her to do so, for it was by order of the Emperor himself that she was remaining in England with the Prince Imperial. Her stay in Hastings was a short one, but not short enough to prevent a grave incident from occurring—an incident fraught with incalculable consequences.

One day, as the Prince Imperial was walking on the beach with his tutor, M. Filon, he

was accosted by a man who, bowing very respectfully, said, "Monseigneur, I am a Frenchman, a devoted adherent of the Empire and a faithful subject of the Emperor, and I am on my way to Wilhelmshöhe, where I hope to have the happiness of presenting my respects to the Emperor. I have with me a photograph of Hastings with the houses looking on to the beach. I would very much like to give it to his Majesty, and if your Imperial Highness would sign your name to it, I should be able to take the Emperor a souvenir, which I know would give him real pleasure. My name is Régnier."

M. Filon saw no reason why the Prince should not put his signature to the photograph, and asked M. Régnier to go as far as the hotel with them, where, at the bureau, the Prince wrote the following words at the back of the photograph: "Dear father, this is the house in which we are staying at present. My best love, Louis." M. Régnier then retired; he looked very pleased, and appeared to be very grateful, and they saw no more of him. When the Empress was told of this little incident she said to M. Filon: "I must beg of you never to allow the Prince to put his signature to anything whatsoever, without previously consulting me."

And subsequent events proved that she was perfectly right.

Every effort was being made to find a suitable residence for the Empress and her son, and at last a Mr. Strode, who possessed a large house at Chislehurst, and who was an avowed partisan of the Empire, offered to let it to the Empress at a very reasonable rent. His offer was accepted and the Empress entered into possession. It was a big country house, richly furnished and situated in the midst of a fine park full of splendid old trees. There were plenty of flower-beds close to the house, and yet there was something depressing about the place. We often went to see the Empress at Chislehurst and usually stayed to tea. The hours we spent there were sad enough, for the topics to which we continually reverted were so sad in themselves, namely, the misfortunes of France, and those of the Emperor. Our thoughts turned ever to Metz, where Bazaine still held out with the bulk of his army.

We lived very quietly in London and hardly saw anyone except our own immediate friends. We made, however, one exception, and asked to be received by the old Duchess of Cambridge, whose sympathies were entirely with France. She had hated Prussia ever since the war of 1866, which had deprived her nephew (the King of Hanover) of his throne, and another nephew (the Duke of Nassau) of his Duchy, and she had sent us messages that were more than kind.

As for myself, I felt very much drawn to the Cambridges, for they had always shown the greatest kindness to my grandfather during his stay in England, and he had appreciated it to the full. So it was with real pleasure that we went down to Kew to pay our respects to the Duchess. She received us with true kindness, and shortly afterwards asked us to come and dine *en famille*. I had in my wardrobe nothing but day-dresses and did not wish to order a new evening dress, so la Duchesse de Mouchy, who had brought away two dinner dresses, offered to lend me one. I cannot conceive how my friend's gown was so satisfactorily arranged for me, for I was as thin as a lath and she was decidedly plump. Seams, however, were taken in here, there, and everywhere, and, strange to say, the result was a complete success. I wore it without looking lost in it, and the Duchess actually managed to get into it again.

Lord Granville was a constant visitor, and well do I remember our endless discussions on the subject of the Prussians, whom I detested, but for whom he professed the greatest admiration. England as a whole was in sympathy with Germany, beginning with Queen Victoria and the Prince of Wales. The Princess of Wales and the Cambridge family were the only exceptions. It seemed to me that Queen Victoria's opinion and that of her son had

veered round to an extraordinary degree. The Duchess of Devonshire was pro-Prussian from head to foot, and her husband had gone over to the Prussian camp, to follow the operations of the army. And yet they had all accepted invitations to Compiègne gladly enough ; and several times a year they would go to Paris, where they were always heartily welcomed. They certainly had not favoured Berlin to the same extent.

One of the things that most astonished and most incensed me, was the sight of several Frenchmen, who, instead of fighting for their country, spent their time strolling about the streets of London, showing themselves at theatres and other public places with complete indifference. I felt absolutely indignant. M. de Caumont, M. La Force and M. de Lamberlye were the three men for whom I felt the most unmitigated contempt, and if I never quarrelled with them it was because I always turned my back on them. My husband had left Paris, and with all the other members of the Diplomatic Corps had gone to Bordeaux, where the Provisional Government was holding its sittings with Gambetta at its head.

One day while la Duchesse de Mouchy and myself were lunching together off some of the tasteless and insipid little dishes which we could hardly bring ourselves to touch—so sick and tired were we of them—the door was

flung open and in walked Captain Duperré, the naval officer in attendance on the Prince Imperial. He looked very much disturbed. Sitting down opposite to us he said : " Do you know who has just arrived at Chislehurst ? "

We both cried with one accord : " The Emperor ! "

" What an idea ! " answered Duperré. " No. General Bourbaki ! "

We were so completely taken aback that we uttered not a word. At last we began to question him, but all that Duperré was able to tell us was that Bazaine had ordered the General to leave Metz, that he had managed to get across the German lines in a staff carriage, that he had just arrived at Chislehurst, and that we were requested to go there at once. Duperré had come to London to bring us this news himself, but having some business engagements he would not be able to return with us. He told us that we should be able to catch a train that was leaving for Chislehurst in about an hour. Then he said good-bye and left us. Monsieur de la Rive turned up a few moments later ; he had just arrived from Paris.

Still under the impression of this astounding piece of news, we passed it on to our friend, who, like ourselves, was greatly disturbed on hearing it. He could not conceive how Bourbaki had got away, nor was he able to

understand for what reasons Marshal Bazaine had decided to send him to England—to the Empress. He asked whether this news was to be kept secret, or whether he might inform le Duc d'Aumâle of what had happened—he was going to Twickenham that evening. La Duchesse de Mouchy said she could not see any objection to his doing so, as le Duc d'Aumâle was certainly one of those to whom any news concerning the French army might be communicated, and that it would be quite sufficient to ask him to keep it to himself.

M. de la Rive then left us. He went off to Twickenham and we went to Charing Cross to catch the train for Chislehurst. On arriving there Madame de Mouchy asked me to buy the tickets. I looked at her with dismay—I hadn't a farthing on me ; both of us had left our purses at home. We explained this to the man at the ticket office. He was very civil, but expressed his regret at not being able to give us our tickets on credit. I offered to leave one of my diamond rings with him as a pledge, but he shook his head and refused to take it. Seeing that further persuasion was useless, I summoned up all my courage and spoke to a man—quite unmistakably a gentleman—who was standing beside me. I said : " Monsieur, the lady who is here with me is la Duchesse de Mouchy—I am Princess Metternich. We are staying

for the moment at Fleming's Hotel, and have been requested to go down to Chislehurst to see the Empress Eugénie without a moment's loss of time. Will you be kind and generous enough to buy our tickets, as we have unfortunately left our purses at home?" It was impossible to behave more kindly and more courteously than he did. I begged him to give us his address so that we might refund him that same evening, but he said it was such a trifle he really could not think of troubling us to do so. But I insisted on it, and told him that in no circumstances could we accept his kind assistance unless he agreed to allow us to return the money, adding that if he did not consent to do so we should feel very much embarrassed. He at once gave us his card, and I need hardly say our memories did not again fail us!

We got to Chislehurst at about four o'clock. In the long passage that ran parallel with the drawing-room I found myself face to face with General Bourbaki. He was absolutely livid, and was walking up and down the passage. The Duchess and I stopped to shake hands with him, after which we went in to the Empress. She was sitting in an arm-chair with her head buried in her hands. She looked at us as we came in, and exclaimed: "Well, what do you think of all this?" And then she told us exactly what had happened.

It seems that Marshal Bazaine had sent for General Bourbaki and had told him to start at once for Chislehurst, to present himself to the Empress, and await her instructions. The General on arriving had handed her his orders, at the head of which was written these words :

" From Marshal Bazaine, Commander-in-Chief of the Army."

The message ran as follows :

" General Bourbaki, by order of the Marshal, is to proceed at once to England, to Chislehurst, where he will await the instructions of the Empress-Regent. Signed—BAZAINE."

After giving these orders to General Bourbaki, the Marshal took them back, effaced the date they bore, and antedated them. The General asked him how he was to get out of the fortress. The Marshal said he had seen to everything. He was to wear the uniform of a German doctor which he had been able to procure, and would also be given a suit of plain clothes which he was to put on after he had crossed the German lines—the Marshal was lending him a suit of his own.

I think, but cannot be perfectly certain, that the Marshal informed General Bourbaki that a certain Régnier had given him a photograph of the beach at Hastings, on which the Prince Imperial had scribbled a few lines. Régnier had undoubtedly used this photograph

as a *laisser passer*, and had passed himself off as a messenger coming directly from the Empress Eugénie. The whole affair was inexplicable. Had the Marshal really been taken in by this intriguer, or had he himself purposely misled Bourbaki by giving him to understand that he had received certain formal orders from the Empress? Did he wish to get rid of the General because the latter was urging him to make a sortie, whereas he (Bazaine) had made up his mind to remain inside the fortress? The fact remains that the apparently insignificant photograph played a considerable part in this perplexing affair, for I distinctly heard it mentioned in connection with the dismay caused by the General's arrival.

This is what actually took place when Bourbaki presented himself before the Empress.

Her Majesty was sitting quietly in her room when Madame Lebreton rushed in like one distraught. "Madame," she cried, "my brother is here!"

The Empress thought her lady-in-waiting had suddenly gone out of her mind. Going up to her and taking both her hands she said, "Come, come, my poor friend, try and calm yourself; your brother, the General, is in Metz."

"He is here, Madame!" repeated Madame

Lebreton. "I have not taken leave of my senses. Look!" she cried, throwing open the door that led into the passage. "Look—there he is!"

The next moment the Empress and Bourbaki stood facing one another.

Her Majesty was petrified. At last she spoke.

"What are you doing here?"

"But, Madame," faltered the General (he was literally trembling), "here are my orders from Marshal Bazaine, in which he tells me to present myself at Chislehurst to take your Majesty's orders."

"My orders!" cried the Empress. "What orders? I have none to give you. I know nothing. . . . What have you brought me? What does the Marshal want? What is it that he asks of me?"

"Madame, I know nothing; here are my orders." Suddenly his fortitude gave way. "What I do know," he said brokenly, "is that I am disgraced in the sight of the army, for I have deserted my men at the point of battle."

And there, in a few words, you have the drama in which Bazaine and Bourbaki were the leading characters, a drama to which others beside myself had the clue, when, after the war, an action was brought against Bazaine. It certainly was one of the chief reasons for which he was condemned.

After leaving the Empress, we again saw General Bourbaki, who was walking up and down the passage like a caged lion ; he was dressed in a suit belonging to Marshal Bazaine ; it was far too large for him, and at any moment his appearance would have struck me as ridiculous.

Over and over again, with a sob in his throat, he repeated the same words. " Disgraced, a coward in the sight of my men ; it is horrible, horrible. What is to become of me ? What is left to me but to blow out my brains ? "

It was terribly distressing. I went up to him and took his hand, saying : " You must not let such words as disgrace or cowardice pass your lips. You are talking wildly, dear General. You hold in your hand the order signed by Marshal Bazaine, in which the Commander-in-Chief orders you to England. You are a soldier, you have obeyed your orders—how could you have acted otherwise ? The only responsible person is the Marshal himself ; and if anyone is guilty, I am afraid it is he. I will say no more. The future will speak for itself ; but follow my advice, get away from here as soon as possible, go to Bordeaux, put yourself into the hands of the Provisional Government, and state the simple facts of the case."

The General pressed my hand, and embraced

me. "You are right," said he, "I shall start at once." He went and bade farewell to the Empress, and that same night he left England.

M. de la Rive came to see us that evening at our hotel. He told us that le Duc d'Aumâle could not bring himself to believe that General Bourbaki had been down to Chislehurst. On being told that la Duchesse de Mouchy was responsible for this news, and therefore it was sure to be true, the Duke had answered: "Women's gossip! that's what it is; their imagination sticks at nothing, not even at the impossible!" M. de la Rive, who was nothing if not discreet, did not care to tell him that the Duchess had had it direct from Captain Duperré himself.

On the following day the Duke came up to London and went to see M. de la Rive. "Ma foi," said he, as he came into the room, "you were right enough, and I humbly beg the Duchess's pardon. It seems that Bourbaki really *has* been down to Chislehurst! What mystery lies hidden beneath all this!" He was able to unveil the mystery for himself when, later on, at Versailles, he was President of the Council of War.

We were well into October; it was not possible for the children to remain any longer at Johannisberg, and as the war showed no signs of drawing to a close—far from it—my husband advised me to return to Austria. He

himself was obliged to stay on for an indefinite time at Bordeaux, so there was no reason for me to wait for him. On the 20th of October I left London for Vienna, but not before I had bidden the Empress good-bye and had promised to come back and see her with my husband.

The Austrian Ambassador, Count Rudolf Apponyi, who rather feared lest I might complicate matters for him, was at no pains to conceal his satisfaction at my departure. But I must say I think his fears were a trifle exaggerated, for as far as I know, he was never called upon to intervene in any matter wherein I was concerned. Indeed, I never saw him but once during the six weeks I spent in London.

XVIII

THE YEAR OF THE WAR (1870–1871)—IN AUSTRIA

On arriving in Vienna I settled down at the Villa on the Rennweg, where I received a letter from my husband telling me that I might shortly expect a visit from M. Jules de Serres, a French engineer, who, with M. de Freycinet, was going to Austria. Both these gentlemen had been appointed "Inspecteurs dirigeants" of the army.

It was Gambetta to whom this extraordinary idea had occurred. M. de Serres was returning to Vienna, as he was one of the directors of the railways in the south of Austria, and if I remember right, he was sent by the Provisional Government to purchase rifles and war material. I cannot, however, vouch for the truth of this. He came to see me in order to bring me news of my husband. He spoke with extraordinary assurance of his own talent for organisation, and assured me that he and M. de Freycinet, between them, would put the army on quite a different footing. Gambetta, he declared, was determined to pursue the war with the greatest energy. M. de Serres seemed to think that

the magical name of the Republic was in itself more than sufficient to restore the nation's courage and to assure Victory ; but he gave me the impression of a man who, above all, wished to produce an effect ; he did not inspire me with any confidence whatsoever.

That same evening I saw M. de Mosbourg, *chargé d'affaires* at the French Embassy. I told him all about my interview with M. de Serres, and he quite agreed with me in my estimate of that gentleman. The news from France was deplorable, going from bad to worse. Metz had capitulated. All hopes were now centred in the Army of the Loire, entrenched behind Orléans, and in General Bourbaki, who was to take command of a new army corps which was to be sent to Belfort. Paris was in despair. Austria had wished to intervene, but was prevented from doing so by —Russia ! When the Austrian Government proposed to arrest the progress of Prussia by siding with France, the Russian Government sent word to say that on the day we came to her rescue, Russian troops would invade Galicia ! In this way there would have been two wars to deal with instead of one, and Austria was perforce obliged to give up all hope of succouring France. In spite of this, twenty-eight years later, France acclaimed the Russians as their saviours—as their best friends ! I make a special point of mentioning the intervention

proposed by us because everyone seems to have forgotten all about it. *But I am speaking about what I know to be an indisputable fact.*

As soon as peace was signed, my husband left Bordeaux and joined me in Vienna toward the end of March. Herr von Beust, who was at the head of affairs at that time, told him that they wished to retain him as Ambassador, but that it was impossible for him to return to France in that capacity unless the Government of the Republic was established under an organised Presidency, able to give satisfactory guarantees of stability. We were not particularly delighted with this prospect; my husband told me that he would see whether it would be possible to remain in Paris, but he had his doubts on the subject; he felt sure that he would be looked upon with a certain amount of mistrust, as he was quite determined not to give up his friendship with the Emperor and Empress.

The Commune was now in full swing, and one fine day the newspapers announced that Paris was in flames. It was also reported that the houses belonging to the Empress in the Rue de l'Élysée had been set on fire! We just looked at one another, and then, quite calmly, as though it were a subject that did not concern us in any way, we said, "Well, then, everything will have been destroyed!" We had been through so much that the loss

of furniture, *bibelots*, clothes, etc., left us in a state almost bordering on indifference. We were rewarded for our stoicism, as later on we heard that our own house had been respected, and after a while we recovered all our possessions. The siege of Paris, however, affected us personally in rather a tiresome way. All our autumn and winter clothes had been left behind and we were obliged to fit ourselves out from head to foot. I had left Paris in the month of August at a moment's notice and had brought away nothing that was not strictly necessary. Richard had been able to provide for himself more satisfactorily, as he had remained after my departure, and had left Paris only twenty-four hours before the beginning of the siege. As no one imagined for a moment that so prolonged a defence would be made, he also was put to considerable inconvenience and expense, which of course was rather annoying.

After peace had been signed, and M. Thiers had been elected President of the Republic, Herr von Beust asked the French Government whether the appointment of Prince Metternich as Austrian Ambassador to France would be welcomed. The answer was worded very graciously in the affirmative, and my husband returned to Paris in the summer of 1871. M. Thiers received him very cordially, assured him of his personal friend-

ship, and told him with what pleasure he welcomed his return, knowing as he did that all his sympathies were with France, adding at the same time, that he was at perfect liberty to continue his former friendships, as he knew that with regard to business and political affairs he might absolutely rely on his loyalty. Madame Thiers received my husband rather coldly. She was what is vulgarly called *une peur béche*. She had always hated the Empire and had always obstinately set her face against it. Her drawing-room in the Place Saint Georges had been an Orléanist centre ever since the downfall of Louis Philippe.

I went to Paris in August, and two days after my arrival I paid Madame Thiers an official visit, but I must frankly own that seldom have I gone through a more trying ordeal. Madame Thiers was an excessively cold woman, very narrow-minded and a dreadful poser. I had often met her during the Empire in various Orléanist drawing-rooms, and especially at la Duchesse de Gallièra's (*née* Brignole Sale), whose superb hotel is at this moment occupied by the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador, and which in her will she has left to our Emperor. Madame Thiers was a woman who could look exceedingly well; she had beautiful jewels, and her pearls were magnificent. I am bound to say that

her manners were very good and that she looked very well-bred, "*très gratin*"—that is to say, she belonged to the old school and followed the fashions of the Faubourg St. Germain, which were always a little behind the actual fashions of the day. While other women waved their hair, for instance, she wore hers in straight bandeaux, and the cut of her gowns and the shape of her hats were in themselves a silent protest against what she called "the corruption of the Empire!" I believe she even said the Empire was "lost to all sense of shame!" Madame Thiers, in spite of her cutting vocabulary, had been rather more than *coquette* in her own day, and it was said that Count Roger du Nord had been the recipient of her favours, a fact which had led to grave dissensions in his household. As far as M. Thiers was concerned, his amiable spouse held a very small place in his affections. She did the honours of his house very satisfactorily, and that was all he asked of her.

M. Thiers, whom I had known for a long time, having met him in Brussels and afterwards at Johannisberg in my grandfather's house, was a tiny, pot-bellied little man whose face was intelligent and refined. Behind his spectacles there were a pair of eyes that flashed like lightning. His hair grew on the top of his head rather like a cock's comb. He was astonishingly like the famous type of Parisian

bourgeois created by Henri Monnier and known as "Monsieur Prudhomme." Nevertheless, had he been presented with a sword of honour by his fellow-citizens, he would never have said what M. Prudhomme said on a similar occasion : "This sword is the proudest day of my life."

M. Thiers was a marvellous orator, and one never wearied of listening to him. Had he spoken for hours on end no one would have thought of complaining. His delivery was slightly nasal when he first began to speak, but after a few minutes his voice became resonant, and grew in volume to such an extent that it filled the Chamber of Deputies from one end to the other. Every word told. Woe betide anyone who ventured to interrupt him ! He had always an answer ready for the delinquent, and it was an answer that invariably reduced him to silence and brought forth roars of laughter from everyone else.

One day, at the Duchesse de Gallièra's house, I remember someone finding fault with the Emperor Napoleon on account of the way he had behaved to the Holy Father on a certain occasion. This person feared that the very existence of the Papacy at Rome was at stake.

"I wouldn't care a straw if the Emperor swallowed the Pope alive," answered M. Thiers, "providing he choked himself to death during the performance."

M. Thiers was a staunch Orléanist at heart; he loathed the Empire. After the battle of Wörth and the resignation of Émile Ollivier, the Empress-Regent asked him whether, in view of the terrible danger with which the country was threatened, he would not take the reins of Government into his own hands. He refused point-blank, saying that he would never consent to serve the Empire—not even to save France!

I never saw Madame Thiers again after that visit to Versailles. In December, 1871, M. Thiers, in spite of all his former professions of friendship, hinted to Count Andrassy (who had replaced Count Beust at the Foreign Office) that Prince Metternich's relations with the Bonapartist party were causing him considerable anxiety, and that it might be just as well if the Austrian Government would nominate another Ambassador.

My husband got wind of this attitude, and without losing a moment sent in his resignation to Vienna. My cousin Andrassy did not argue the question with M. Thiers; he did not tell him that the Austrian Government had no intention whatsoever of submitting to demands which it considered absurd, nor did he suggest that the French Government—all things considered—might think itself very much honoured by having an Ambassador instead of a Resident Minister. But he thanked

my husband very warmly indeed for having facilitated his task. His resignation was accepted, and M. Thiers was duly informed of the fact. I don't think my husband could in any case have remained much longer. He would have been bound to send in his resignation, as we were absolutely determined to go and see the Emperor and Empress as often as their Majesties did us the honour of asking us to do so.

We packed up our trunks toward the middle of January and left Paris to spend the rest of the winter at Mentone, where we had taken a villa with the grandiloquent name of Palais Carnalès, which had once been the property of the Prince of Monaco.

This departure, which in former days would have been a source of real grief to us, was far less painful at present owing to the disagreeable situation in which we found ourselves with regard to the new Government, which was odious to both of us. Still, it is not possible to leave a place where the happiest years of one's life have been spent without a very real pang of regret. How many kind friends we were leaving behind us! how many happy memories! but also how many memories of ruin, of terrible catastrophe!

After a farewell dinner at the Café Voisin, which was attended by many friends, and which was more like a funeral feast, we drove

to the station, past the Tuileries, reduced to ashes, past the Hôtel de Ville, which had also been burned to the ground, and as we drove along, it seemed to us as if the twelve years we had spent in Paris had existed in our dreams alone. The Empire itself had crumbled away, and everything, down to the very Palace itself, where we had so often been guests at the most brilliant fêtes, at the gayest, the most delightful gatherings—everything had vanished !

THE END

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